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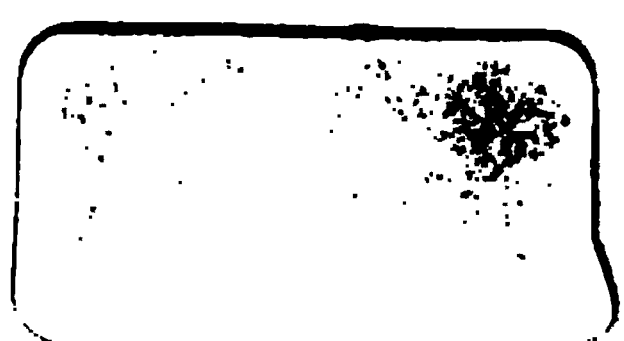




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HISTORY OF RUSSIA

AND OF

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HISTORY OF RUSSIA

AND OF

PETER THE GREAT;

BY



GENERAL COUNT PHILIP DE SEGUR,

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF NAPOLEON'S EXPEDITION TO
RUSSIA IN 1812.

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ERRATA.

Page 3, line 10 from the bottom, for the Sukhana, read the Northern Dwina.

Page 15, line 15, for Biel-o-zero, read Bielozero, or Bielo-ozero.

Page 66, line 14, add, as a note,—From Kief to Tchernigof is thirty-six leagues.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Sciences are spreading with rapidity. A larger share of our attention is every day required by them. At the same time, our recent political emancipation adds to the number of our pursuits, and of our habitual duties, and the lessons of history become more than ever indispensable for our guidance. But how can we satisfactorily attend to the present, if we do not abridge the study of the past? It is, therefore, a matter of necessity for the major part of us, to have to learn only in masses the political and philosophical progress of great nations, down to the period at which we live.

This is the reason why, passing over details, I have confined myself to the frame of the Russian colossus. I have not attempted to follow its growth, except in its most important stages; or its march, except in its most striking movements. In other words, I have sought to discover the reason or the spirit of its long history; I have endeavoured to compress, to abridge, to circumscribe it within the

limits of an almost synoptical table ; and have laboured to trace it in characters which may be legible to the eyes of both sexes, and of every age.

By so laborious a search, I may, perhaps, have succeeded in throwing a new ray of light upon these historical ruins. But, even should I merely have planted a few pickets to indicate the path, my work will not be useless. I shall be satisfied with having pointed out a short and direct road, in which men of higher powers may one day tread. It will be sufficient to me to have established the real ground-work of this history, obtained a leading clue to it, and given it into native hands, who will be able to trace more closely than I can, the thread of the destinies of their ancestors.

Several authors have already written upon this subject. Nevertheless, the first portion of it is, perhaps, not so familiar to us that we can treat upon it, without running the risk of not being generally understood. I, therefore, think it necessary, at the commencement, to point out, in a few lines, the connection of the principal facts, and to bring before the view of the reader the series of Princes of the first dynasty, who occupied, with the greatest renown, a scene so extensive and so remote. Then, after having attempted to disentangle, to seize, and to follow the main thread of the Russian history down to the time of Peter I. I shall justify the title of my work, and attain my proposed object, by a picture of the reign of that illustrious man.

It appears to me that the history of great personages, generally, is commenced by a portraiture of them ; they excite more interest by being known ; besides, this affords an explanation of many events : it is the same with respect to empires. For this reason, we begin by the following statistical picture of Russia.

HISTORY OF RUSSIA.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE Russian empire extends over three hundred and sixty-eight thousand square miles, of fifteen to the degree : a hundred thousand miles in Europe ; more than two hundred and forty-three thousand miles in Asia ; and the residue in America.

This empire comprehends one half of Europe, and a third of Asia ; it forms a ninth part of the habitable globe.

Its European division is peopled by fifty-eight millions of inhabitants ; its Asiatic, by two millions ; its American, by fifty thousand : the total number is sixty millions of souls ;* which, however, does not give more than about a hundred and sixty-one persons to each square mile.

* Up to the year 1819, statistical writers did not estimate the whole population of Russia at more than forty-six millions of souls ; but in 1822, Balbi raised the estimate to fifty-four millions ; Hassel, in 1823, to fifty-nine millions two hundred and sixty-three thousand seven hundred ; and Malte-Brun, in 1826, to fifty-nine millions at least.

It is true that, in 1828, Weydemeyer reduced it again to fifty-three millions ; but the calculations of Balbi and Hassel had, beforehand, refuted this last estimate, which they look upon as erroneous.

In this population, and in Europe alone, we perceive two millions and a half of Finns, less than five hundred thousand Germans and Scandinavians, and fifty millions of Slavonians, of whom four millions are Poles.

The Russian territory is considered to be capable of supporting a hundred and fifty millions of human beings, and its population to increase at the yearly rate of half a million.

The Oural mountains, the river of the same name, and the great Caucasian chain, divide the Asiatic portion of it from the European.

THE ASIATIC PART.—The surface of Siberia slopes towards the Frozen Ocean, into which it pours its waters; this slope, and the loftiness of the enormous table-land which gives birth to its rivers, are the two chief causes of the severity of its climate.

Its superficies contains about seven hundred thousand square leagues, of which not more than two fifths are susceptible of cultivation. The south-west is remarkable for its fertility; but to the north of the sixtieth parallel of latitude, and to the east of the Jenisei, all culture ceases; doubtless, because the great table-land of Mongolia overlooks, with an altitude equal to that of the Cordilleras, that desolate space which it presses against, and exposes to the north, and which it thus places between two eternal glaciers, its own, and that of the Pole.

The two seas of this gloomy country are thronged with monsters productive of oil; its rivers are swelled to overflowing with fishing banks; its plains, its immense forests, its icy deserts, are peopled by flocks, or by wild animals whose fur is valuable; its mountains are fraught with every species of metal.

The south of Siberia is subject to short but burning summers, and to biting winters. So rigorous is the cli-

mate of its other parts, that it is sufficient for the punishment of the greatest crimes. Over these vast deserts wander, or are scattered, two millions of inhabitants.

THE EUROPEAN PART.—The European portion of the Russian empire is divided, by the best authorities, into three regions: the hot, the temperate, and the cold. The first begins at the fortieth degree, the second at the fiftieth, the third at the fifty-seventh.*

The middle region contains thrice as many inhabitants as the two others. Why does this region, which is called temperate, experience a severer degree of cold than the Low Countries, Holland, England, Saxony, and Prussia, which are under the same parallels of latitude? Geographers deduce the cause of it, firstly, from the continuity of the Russian territory as far as the polar circle, while all the western countries of Europe are bounded by the sea to a much remoter distance from the Pole; and, secondly, to the trifling elevation of the chain which separates the northern and southern slopes of that territory; an elevation which is insufficient to shelter European Russia from the polar blasts.

Here, nevertheless, are the points from which, in opposite directions, descend the Dwina and the Dnieper, the Volga and the Sukhana.

The uncertain and dubious outline of these summits passes by Valdai, which gives its name to them; it is found again between Vologda and Yaroslaf; it indicates, in several parts of it, the commencement of the cold region.

It is from their swampy table-land, and from these insignificant eminences, that the waters of European Russia glide down, and slowly find their way into its north, north-east, and south seas.

The three Russian climates, however, as far as Olonetz,

* See Weydemeyer, Storch, Pallas, Tooke, Malte-Brun, &c.

favour, or permit, the ripening of the most necessary kinds of grain, and of many others. To the southward, the soil affords honey, all varieties of fruit, salt, and, especially, rich pasturages, which extend into the temperate region; even the north has those pasture lands; and all are covered by innumerable flocks of every species, from the camel to the reindeer.

Impenetrable forests, of trees of various natures, in the middle and southern regions; and of birch and resinous trees in the northern parts; abound with game, and, in the north, with animals producing rich furs.

Bounded by several seas, covered with lakes towards the north-west, furrowed by deep rivers, which, through the means of easy canals, unite, by three communications, the northern seas to the seas of the south, this vast country abounds, like Siberia, with marine monsters, and with fishes of every description.

Finally, from north to south, the great Oural opens to all the wants, and to all the passions of the Russians, its inexhaustible mines of iron, of copper, and some of platina, of silver, and even of gold.*

However magnificent this picture of Russia may appear to be, it is faithfully copied from nature.

* From the Russian Journal of the Mines, for 1825, and the Patriotic Annals, for 1826, it appears that, in six years and a half, from 1818 to 1824, the Ouralian mines produced three millions five hundred and sixty-seven thousand two hundred and seventeen rubles, of silver, and especially of gold. According to the same authorities (and error or exaggeration excepted), the same mines gave, in only the last six months of 1824, to the amount of five millions three hundred and seventy-seven thousand and five rubles, and eighty-seven kopecks, in gold and silver.

CHAPTER II.

LET us now proceed to its history ; and, for the sake of brevity with respect to that part of it which may be called ancient, let us observe, that it comes down to the ninth century of the Christian era, and that, as it is obscure and barren of interest, whatever is to be said of it must occupy but a small portion of the text, and be abundant in notes and documents.

The scene of action is nearly the European part of the present Russian empire. On this vast field of battle, and in that night of time, central Asia will be seen often victorious, and Scandinavia often acquiring the ascendancy in its turn. The most remote of those northern irruptions, of which we have any knowledge, seem to have occurred, —the first,* three hundred years before Jesus Christ ; the second,† two hundred and fifty years after, under

* This is very uncertain. Pytheas of Marseilles says, however, that the Goths crossed the Baltic three hundred years before Jesus Christ. Is it to this period that we ought to refer the destruction of that Slavensk which tradition represents as having existed on lake Ilmen ? Tacitus affirms, that in the glorious times of the Roman republic, the Cimbri and Teutones had descended from the Baltic sea. Nevertheless, their appearance in Italy is much posterior to the epoch mentioned by Pytheas of Marseilles.

† The Russian chronicles say, that the Slavonians then fled towards the south ; consequently, they were attacked from the north. Besides, Jornandes, a civilized Goth, who wrote at Ravenna, states that, about A. D. 250, Amala, king of the Goths and son of the gods, descended from the North, and drew with him against the Greeks, the Slavonians, the Venedi, and the Antæ, who dwelt in the countries comprehended between Finland and the Borysthenes.

Amala and Hermanric ; and the third in 862, under the great Rurik, the founder of the Russian empire.

But the founding of this empire, and the last invasion of Russia by the people of central Asia, who were called into activity by the genius of Genghis Khan, belong to its modern history.

The Russian empire, therefore, does not, in reality, commence till the middle of the ninth century. In its history there are to be observed, five great periods, two dynasties, twelve remarkable princes, and five capitals.

Of these five prominent periods, the first, comprehending a space of a hundred and ninety-two years, from 862 to 1054, presents to our view the foundation of the empire, in Novgorod, by Rurik the Great, the leader of the Varangians, or Vaeringar, of the Baltic sea ; its enormous extension under the potent Oleg, successor of Rurik, and his superior in greatness, who was regent for Rurik's son Igor, and who gave to this rising state Kief as its capital, together with a large part of the present European Russia. Then follows the protracted reign of the weak Igor, who, though son of Rurik the Great, pupil of the great Oleg, and husband of the celebrated Olga, was an insignificant prince, and was, perhaps, rendered so by this threefold proximity.

To this reign succeeds a second regency, that of St. Olga, the widow of Igor. This princess, the first Christian Russian, was baptised at Constantinople. She is famous for the crafty and terrible revenge which, for the murder of her husband, she took upon the ferocious Drevlians,* whose subjugation she completed. Her administration is remarkable. To her the republic of Pskof was indebted for its liberties, which rendered it so flourishing

* Their capital is said to have been situated near the confluence of the Pripiat with the Dnieper.

during the space of six centuries. It was this princess who divided the north of Russia into various administrative districts. Down to the period of the annalists, her greatness continued to fill the memories, the mouths, and the hearts of the people.

She was the mother of Sviatoslaf, a harsh, rough, inflexible, impetuous warrior,—the Achilles, the Charles the Twelfth, of that epoch. As Oleg had removed his capital from Novgorod to Kief, so did Sviatoslaf remove his to Bulgaria;* in each remove approaching nearer to the empire of the Greeks: but he was driven from it by them; and, in his retreat, his skull became the cup of the leader of the Patzinacites, on the same soil where, eight centuries later, Charles the Twelfth was destined to be overcome by Peter the Great, and in consequence of similar obstinacy.

Subsequent to him, and to Yaropolk, a prince who was a mere cypher, this first period at length displays to us the highest gothic glory of the Russian empire, under Vladimir the Great, in 988, and its conversion to Christianity. Then succeeds Sviatopolk. Were it not for his fratricides, and the first invasion of the Poles in Kief, of which he was the prompter, this miscreant would pass almost unperceived between his father, the great Vladimir, and his brother Yaroslaf the legislator, the fifth eminent man of this dynasty, but with whom, in 1054, closed the first glorious period of that empire.

In the second period, from 1054 to 1236, comprising a hundred and eighty years, a period wholly devoted to discord and to internal dilacerations, the empire was divided and subdivided, like a private property, among the descendants of Rurik.

Amidst a throng of these princes, who reciprocally con-

* Western Bulgaria, the ancient *Moesia*.

tended for their appanages, and especially for the throne of Kief, we hardly distinguish an uninterrupted series of seventeen paramount princes, succeeding from brother to brother, and from uncle to nephew, down to the obscure Yury, who was slain by the Tartars in 1237.

This people of Grand Princes, ranged in this singular order of succession, offers to our view only two men of note, Vladimir Monomachus, in 1114, and Andrew, about 1157.

The first of these restored to the empire a moment of unity, by the ascendant of his valour and his virtues, and in spite of the efforts of the Polovtzy, nomadic tribes of the south, whom he succeeded in crushing. The second, abandoning Kief, made Vladimir the capital of his empire. His policy raised him above the unfortunate times in which he lived. He is the only one who seemed to be aware of the cause of so much dissension, and who strove to annihilate it.

The third period opens, in 1237, with the subjugation of Russia, in consequence of its intestine divisions. It continues for two hundred and twenty-three years, till 1460.

A multitude of Russian princes, the Grand Prince, three of his sons, and their mother, are massacred by the Tartars; but two brothers of the Grand Prince still survive; they successively fill his place. The eldest has five sons, who, in succession, transmit to, or wrest from each other, the sceptre, or receive it from the Tartars.

The third, St. Alexander Nevsky, is a great man, in every sense of that emphatic word. He is a hero, victor over the Teutonic knights, the Swedes, and even the Lithuanians, who had rushed on upon hearing the sound of the falling Russian empire; he is a martyr of the most patriotic devotedness, who thrice bends his way to the ex-

tremity of Asia, to disarm the Tartar wrath, which is about to crush the remnant of his imprudent and unruly subjects.

Two of his sons, unworthy of him, ascend the throne, after two of their uncles. Mikhail of Twer, their cousin, succeeds to them about 1300. Then begins a contest of twenty-eight years, fraught with treason, baseness, and treachery, between the branch of the princes of Twer and that of the princes of Moscow. But in 1328 the Grand-princedom is secured by the latter, in the person of Ivan I. surnamed *Kalita*.

This prince is worthy of note, because with him recommenced, firstly, the reuniting of the appanages with the Grand-princedom of Moscow, which was become the capital ; secondly, the rallying round the Great Prince, of those princes who held appanages ; thirdly, the re-establishment of succession in the direct line ; and, lastly, a system of concentration of power, by which the Russian empire was one day to be again raised up, and transformed into that terrific mass which we now behold.

This direct succession, and this system, were intermitted but for an instant, to revive in 1362, in the great Dnistry Donskoy, the first conqueror of the Tartars, and to pass to his son and grandson, the two Vassili ; finally, to produce in 1462, after the lapse of a century, the uncontested autocracy of Ivan III.

It was in 1462, and with that great Ivan, that the fourth Russian period began ; it ended in 1613, and lasted only a hundred and fifty-three years.

The Russian republics of the north, and the Tartars, sank beneath his power, which he always employed opportunely, circumspectly, progressively, and with machiavelic dexterity. By degrees, the chain with which the Tartars weighed down the Russians came wholly into the hands of

this Grand Prince, who bound with it, the one by means of the other, both the victors and the vanquished, enveloped all in it, and remained sole and absolute master.

His grandson, Ivan IV., great in crime, carried to excess the concentration of this power, in which every thing was swallowed up; manners, morality, patriotism, and the few privileges which, under Ivan III., the Russian nobility had either preserved or acquired, by serving him against the princes who held appanages, the Russian republic, and the Tartars. This madman killed the only one of his two sons who was able to wear this ponderous crown: the result was that, after having been worn by his successor, it passed to the head of a descendant of a Tartar, his treacherous minister, which it crushed, as it did that of all the Russians, Poles, and Swedes, who subsequently dared to seize or aspire to it.

This insane despotism thus destroyed itself. It gave up the corrupted state to invasions from the West, in the same manner that, three centuries and a half before, discord had laid it open to those from the East. This similar effect of two opposite kinds of excess lasted fifteen years; and it seemed as if the empire, brought to its last gasp, were to close its existence with its fourth period.

But it was re-invigorated at that crisis, by the election of a new dynasty: in 1613 the family of Romanof ascended the throne. With them begins the fifth great period of the Russian history; it is the most splendid from the middle of the seventeenth century; it would still have shone with the lustre of the reign of Alexis, the praise-worthy father of Peter the Great, had he not been eclipsed by that colossus.

Thus, to guide us to this illustrious man through the obscurity of those eight centuries, if the distribution of time into five great divisions, and that of men into

two dynasties, will not suffice, twelve great or remarkable princes, like twelve lofty peaks, or twelve rays of various degrees of brilliance, by throwing light on and ascertaining our path, will also serve to direct us.

In the first period, the period of foundation, of glory, and of aggrandizement, we behold *Rurik* the Founder! *Oleg*, the Conqueror! *Olga*, the Regent! *Vladimir*, the Christian! *Yaroslaf*, the Legislator!

In the second, the period of dissensions, the valiant and virtuous *Vladimir Monomachus*, and the politic *Andrew*.

In the third, that of complete slavery, the victorious, the devoted *St. Alexander Nevsky*, the able *Ivan I.*, and *Dmitry Donskoy*, the first who vanquished the Tartars.

Lastly, in the fourth, that of deliverance and of despotism, *Ivan III.* the autocrat, and *Ivan IV.* the Terrible.

But, independent of these twelve lights, these useful beacons, we descry other directing points, geographical points, which also may afford us assistance in classing our observations, and analyzing this enormous mass of history.

We have, in fact, remarked, that the present capital of Russia is the fifth which the empire has had; that, in 862, the conquering genius of *Rurik* placed the first in *Novgorod*; that, from 882, the still greater genius of *Oleg*, together with the allurements and the eager desire of a milder climate, and of the riches, the knowledge, and the comforts of Greek civilization, fixed the second in the south, and at *Kief*; that, in 1167, internal dissensions, the attacks by the Poles in the west, those by the nomade tribes in the south, and the policy of *Andrew*, drew back the third towards the east, at *Vladimir*; that the fourth, and most central, the great *Moscow*, which was to re-unite with it all the empire, rose in 1328, and subjugated the three others by the machiavelism of *Yury*, and the talent of *Ivan*

Kalita, its first princes, and by its position between Vladimir, the first metropolis, and Novgorod the third, which it disjoined from each other; and that, lastly, about 1703, the genius of civilization established the fifth, on the northern frontier, at the head of the gulf of Finland, and on the very coast whence, eight hundred and forty years earlier, the barbarian Rurik, the creator of this empire, commenced his march for the purpose of founding it.

CHAPTER III.

HAVING thus sketched the outline of this mass of history, let us proceed to its principal details; and, without pausing on the almost diluvian origin which is assigned to these tribes, without repeating the names of Japhet, of Russ, of Slavan, and of Scythes, of whom the Russians, the Slavonians, and the Scythians are supposed to be the descendants, let us state that the most anciently known inhabitants of Russia were, the Scythians, to the south; the Slavonians, in the centre; and the Finns, to the north. Let us admit that we are quite ignorant of their earliest source, but that as to the Russian Varangians, every thing leads us to believe that they were Normans.¹

Till the time of Rurik, the history of all of them is at least full of uncertainty:² all that we can discern is, that, down to the ninth century, the extensive territory, which now constitutes European Russia, had often been inundated by great, successive and opposite irruptions; those from central Asia, and those from Scandinavia. If, however, we may judge from the last Tartar irruption, pre-

¹ ² See the two notes at the end of the Volume.

vicious to 860, that of the Khozars (or Chazares), it will appear that the Asiatic invasions never penetrated, in a northern direction, beyond the spots where Kief and Kaluga are now situated.

As to the Norman irruptions, with the exception of that of Amala, king of the Goths, and son of the gods, who, about the year 250, carried with him, against the Roman empire, all the Slavonians of the country comprehended between Finland and the Borysthene, they appear to have flowed off to the right hand, towards the south-west; so that, from the Oka and the upper Dnieper as far as the Baltic, all the Slavonian and Finnish tribes who dwelt in the centre and the north of European Russia, and thus were between the two irruptions, were able to live in tranquillity, to multiply, and even already, as was the case with the great Novgorod, to acquire riches by means of a considerable commerce.

But, to complete the cursory view which we have taken in passing through the obscurities of the history of ancient Russia, let an antique chronicle speak; and though, doubtless, it rests on no other evidence than oral traditions and songs of the olden time, let us listen to some accents of that voice which, almost alone, is heard from the midst of the darkness.

“ At this time,” it says, (speaking of the ninth century) “ a spirit of insubordination disturbed the great city; Novgorod lost its supremacy by it, the empire its unity. The Russian Varangians descended from the north with war, and the great city was vanquished, and made tributary.

“ Excessive was then the confusion; but, being defeated by the Ugrians, weakened by contagion, oppressed by the Varangians, the people besought Gostomielz, a descendant of their ancient chiefs, to place himself at their head. The

Slavonians were successful in the war; the Varangian prince espoused Umila, the daughter of Gostomielz; he led her to Finland; she was the mother of the great Rurik.

“Gostomielz was a prudent leader; from the most distant countries his reputation attracted a throng of princes, who came by sea and land to seek his advice, and gain instruction. The time came when he assembled the elders of the nations; those of the Slavonians, Russians, Tschudes, Merians, Krivitches, Dragvischians, and Muromians; and he said to them, ‘*I see no union among you; you wish to be your own governors, but you are governed by your passions; the great Novgorod will perish if you do not choose princes worthy of ruling you. My three sons are dead, and your only hope of safety is in my nephews, the Varangian princes, Rurik, Sinaf,* and Truvor.*’

“He spoke thus, and died. In compliance with his advice, the principal citizens sought the Varangian princes. ‘*Our country,*’ said they, ‘*is large and fruitful, but it is without order; come and govern it according to our laws.*’

“The princes hesitated, for they knew the pride and licentiousness of Novgorod.” They, however, established themselves at Ladoga, Biel-o-zero, and Isbork; it was not till after the lapse of three years, and the death of his brothers, that Rurik took up his residence at Novgorod.

It has been thought proper to leave its original colouring to the narrative which has just been read; that narrative is quoted as an authority by some, and discredited, in many of its circumstances, by others. One thing is certain; that, at the period in question, Novgorod was so powerful as to occasion it to be said, “Who can dare to oppose God and Novgorod the great?”

It is likewise known, that, even then, the commerce of

* Or Sineus.

Novgorod extended to Persia, and to India itself, and from Byzantium to Vineta, a very commercial Slavonian city, at the mouth of the Oder. It is known, too, that, about the middle of the ninth century, anarchy arose there, either from the abuse of liberty, or from the pride of wealth.

In this state of things, a geographical circumstance drew down war upon Novgorod. Its most active commerce was carried on through the Baltic: it passed amidst the Russian Varangians, Scandinavian warriors, who were then masters of that sea. A passage was to be obtained only by tribute, or by force: hostilities ensued, and the Novgorodians were rendered tributary.

Let us here remark the position of the three Russian princes in Ladoga, Biel-o-zero, and Isbork, encircling the commercial Novgorod, all the outlets from which they thus occupied. Rather than relinquish all ideas of traffic, and change its manners, Novgorod of course preferred to submit; and this, no doubt, was the cause which enabled Rurik to take peaceable possession of it.

It is affirmed that he then took the title of Grand-Prince, which implies the existence of other princes; that he enlarged the city, and gave it laws, and that, nevertheless, Vadime the brave, the head of the republican party, revolted against him. But if, in a civilized country, it is difficult to keep even a native army within bounds, how is it possible to believe in the moderation of an army of pirates, on a foreign soil? There are even traces of the military government which Rurik brought from the North. All the cities were portioned out among his companions in arms; but, whether the protectors or the protected were to blame, the fact is indisputable, that, divided between the warriors of Rurik, the country became Russian, and that from this epoch we must date that new name of so

many Slavonian and Finnish tribes of European Russia, and also the origin of their slavery.

As to the conquest of Kief, by Askold and Dir, the subjects of Rurik, we know not the cause of it. Neither are we acquainted with the cause of their expedition against Constantinople,* which city they alarmed, which, however, repulsed them, and whence they brought back to Kief the first seeds of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE birth of this empire was closely followed by an immense and premature growth ; for it appears certain, that, as early as the first successors of Rurik, Russia extended from the Vistula and the Carpathian mountains to the Volga, from the White and the Baltic seas to the Black sea and the Caspian,† and even that its fleets imposed upon Byzantium the payment of tribute.

For this phenomenon there were several causes. In the first place, we may remark the uniting, in Novgorod, of the most warlike people with the richest and most commercial. This, alone, could not fail to bring about a revolution in that part of the world. But a motive power was still necessary, and this was found in the genius of Oleg, which was in unison with the circumstances.

This successor of Rurik was a great man ; which is sufficient to account for the greatest things. He seems to have possessed in a high degree the qualifications, the vices,

* See Karamsin, Photius, and Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

† See Weydemeyer.

and all the passions, most suitable to the age in which he lived ; a true specimen of barbaric greatness ! brave, crafty, insatiable, adventurous, indefatigable ; faithful, as with respect to Igor his ward, and, nevertheless, occasionally treacherous, as in his conduct to Askold and Dir, when, subsequently to 882, after the capture of Smolensk, having presented himself at Kief as a Novgorodian merchant, he entrapped them into an ambush by these words :—" We are of the same race with you !" and then massacred them as usurpers, saying to them, " You are neither princes, nor sprung from princes ; but I, I am a prince, and here is the son of Rurik !" Then, transported with admiration of his conquest, " Let Kief," he exclaimed, " be the mother of all the Russian cities !" This it became in fact, for nearly three centuries ; and he made it his capital ; not that he might enjoy repose in it, but because it was nearer at hand to the Greek empire,—a prey which was greedily coveted by the barbarians whom he commanded.

But to this pillage he did not lead them till he had well connected his two capitals by a chain of conquests : to establish this connection he first subdued, or won over, all the Slavonian, Finnish, and Lithuanian tribes, which had till then been independent, or tributaries to the degenerated Khans of the eastern Khozars.

In Slavonia itself, where he was desirous of fixing his authority, he was cautious in the use of his power, and moderate in the tributes which he imposed. He tolerated nascent Christianity in Kief, and firmly established there his pupil Igor.

But, when he had completed the founding of his empire, he breathed into all these vanquished tribes, who became his subjects, the adventurous and ferocious avidity of the victors, which he had hitherto restrained. Putting himself at the head of both parties, inflaming their pas-

sions by his own, and combining them in one and the same horrible thirst of blood, of glory, and of plunder, he passed with eighty thousand men, on two thousand barks, the cataracts of the Borysthenes, devastated the Greek empire by atrocious barbarities, and, like Mahomet, conveyed his fleet over a cape, or, as the chronicle affirms, navigated it by land with all sails set, to launch it again in the very port of Byzantium ; he then fixed his shield on the gate of that capital as a trophy, and wrested from the emperor an ignominious treaty, which was negotiated by the twelve Scandinavians, Carles, Farlaf, Veremid, Bulaf, Stemid, &c. his envoys, and those of the illustrious boyards who acknowledged his sway.

His Varangian guard, which seems to have been his council, whose assent appears to have been requisite and sufficient, promised the observance of the treaty. These warriors swore to it by their gods Perune and Voloss, and by their arms, which they had placed before them on the ground : their shields, their golden rings, their naked swords, gold and steel, what they loved and honoured most. The satiate barbarian then departed with his rich booty to Kief, to enjoy there an uncontested authority, and to die there miraculously, as he had lived.

It is, therefore, chiefly in the union of Novgorod and Kief with the Varangians, and in the genius of Rurik and Oleg, that we perceive the first and the principal causes of the aggrandizement, as well as of the foundation, of the Russian empire.

Nevertheless, without the genius of the people, would that of the chiefs have sufficed ? Here is an immense territory and a multitude of nations, which a small warlike tribe seems at once to have subjugated ; for, as to the startling disproportion of the conquerors to the conquered, an idea may be formed, by considering the composition of the army

of Yaroslaf, of which the Varangians constituted only a fortieth part. Let us then endeavour to find, in the manners and customs of both, additional causes of so improbable a fact.

Tacitus says, that the Rugians were remarkable for their attachment to their leaders. The Sucones, he adds, are ruled by an absolute monarch. In 1060, the descendants of Odin are said to have been still reigning in Sweden, and in that country despotism was strengthened by religion. Lomonosof (on the authority of Weissel, Helmold, and John of Bohemia,) states, that one of the early Russian princes asked his people for despotic power; that they granted it to him, and that he joined to it the priesthood.

Amidst the sickening details of the barbarism of the civil and religious manners of the Russians, must be remarked what Yakut, a geographer of the thirteenth century, (quoting Maccadezzy, a traveller of the eleventh,) and Achmet, envoy in 922, from Bagdad to the Bulgarians, state respecting the guards of the Russian princes, and the devotedness which prompted them to sacrifice themselves spontaneously on their tombs. The Slavonians, on the contrary, were very independent. There must, therefore, have been more unity of purpose and action among the Russians, consequently more energy; this alone was enough to enable them to achieve extensive conquests.

In truth, the attachment and submission of the Russians to the family of Rurik is worthy of note; it is indubitable, that the reign of that founder was succeeded by two minorities, and that the two regencies were conferred by the right of blood alone; that the first devolved on an ambitious prince, the second on a female, and that, nevertheless, the two successors of Rurik ascended, peaceably and without dispute, the military throne which had been so recently founded.

According to the testimony of Nestor, in 945, the war-cry of the most distinguished Russian chiefs, who had placed at their head the infant grandson of Rurik, was, "Let us die for our Prince!" It has been seen that, to make Askold and Dir fall at his feet, and Kief into his hands, the regent Oleg had only to name and to produce the son of Rurik.

In the war against the Drevlians, the regent Olga also appears all-powerful; it was a war entirely of stratagem and treachery, such as becomes a woman, whom no war becomes: as she alone directed it, so she alone portioned out the advantages which were derived from it. It is known, too, that, shortly after, this same Olga left her states, went to Constantinople, and embraced Christianity there, without her authority appearing to have been in the least shaken by her absence, and her change of religion. The aristocracy of Vladimir, her grandson, is even yet more astonishing. Lastly, we see Yaroslaf giving a code which begins with these words,* "Behold your laws, for such is my will." The despotic legitimacy of a single family on the throne of Russia, must, it is obvious, have been deeply rooted in the manners of these Northern barbarians.

Add to this reason of their strength, resulting from their union, that their religion was wholly warlike; that they slew each other rather than surrender, being persuaded that a prisoner was the slave of his conqueror, not only in this world, but likewise in the next; and, finally, that, either from their population having again swelled beyond bounds and become burthensome, or from the remembrance of the ancient and fortunate irruptions of their ancestors, or from the excitement produced by some particular cause, their imagination was fired by the genius of conquests. The

* See Leclerc.

greediness and ambition of these Normans were never more enterprising. It was an absolute inundation; all of them panted for booty, for fiefs, for serfs, either in Germany, or in that part of France which has received from them the name of Normandy, or in Great Britain, which they denominated England, or in that vast Slavonia, which became Russian under their dominion.

- Another very operative cause of the rapid extension of this empire, and of the superiority of the Russian Varangians over the Slavonians, is to be found in several ancient and modern writers. Ammianus and Pausanias tell us, that the Scythians and Sarmatians did not make use of iron in their arms; and Gibbon declares that the Esthonians were vanquished by the Goths, because they had only clubs, and no iron, for their defence. Malte-Brun adds, that the Varangians, armed with good cutlasses and sharp swords, easily overcame the Slavonians, who had no other protection than wooden shields. The iron mines of Sweden may thus have been a cause of the conquests made by its inhabitants, the Varangians; as the first conquests of the Turks were the consequence of the arms which they forged in the Altai, while they were held in slavery.

We know, besides, that these Varangians were foot soldiers. Karamsin represents them, from the time of Sviasloslaf, covered with helmets, breast-plates, and vambraces: he states, that they had a system of tactics, and guarded themselves regularly by outposts; that they marched in close battalions, accustomed to manœuvres; that their camps, like those of the Normans in France, were surrounded by ditches, palisades, and even by snares to entrap the enemy, and that they sustained sieges in them. We know, too, that their princes had a permanent guard, maintained or paid, which might be termed noble, and of which the individuals were distinguished and classed by

various denominations and titles. This was, no doubt, one of the causes of their superiority over the Slavonians, who were divided into tribes, independent of each other, and who fought as they pleased, without rules, at random, and unconnectedly.

CHAPTER V.

ALL these considerations, however, are still far from being sufficient; they do not satisfactorily explain how, formidable as those warriors might be, it happened that their scanty numbers could be diffused, without being lost, amidst so many hostile people and territories. The fact is, that all were not hostile. Novgorod the Great was not single in calling upon the Varangians for succour. It appears, from a Russian tradition, that Kief, on the point of being oppressed by the Khozars, implored Rurik, and that, in consequence, that founder sent Askold thither, or permitted him to go.

In the conquering march of Oleg, we see that several of the Slavonian tribes, already broken to the Novgorodian yoke, followed the example of their metropolitan city. About 882, Oleg, when he drove out the Khozars from the country which now forms the governments of Vitepsk and Tschernigof, said to the Severians, "I am the enemy of the Khozars, not of you;" and he contented himself with a trifling tribute. In 965, the Viaticbes, Slavonians of the banks of the Oka, solicited Sviatoslaf to aid them against the Khozars. It was thus that the outrages of the Khozars, the Tartar remains of the last Asiatic invasions, and the dread inspired by the Patzinacites, other Tartars, the forerunners of the great and final invasion which was

impending, reduced, under the Russian sway, a part of the Slavonic tribes of European Russia.

These unfortunate countries were situated between the invasions from the north and the east, and close to the two sources of those terrific inundations; but the Russians invaded for the purpose of ruling, the Tartars for that of plundering: when, therefore, a choice became inevitable, the Russians were preferred.

The circumstance which occasioned this difference of conduct was, that the one party, penetrating into a milder climate, was desirous to establish itself there; while the other, finding the climate less temperate than its own, thought of nothing but pillaging the inhabitants, that it might return to its native home. The habits of the first, also, were sedentary; those of the other, migratory.

Lastly, as appears from a Russian chronicle, the conquest was consolidated by marriages similar to those which brought it about. Rurik, who, as this tradition says, was the son of a Slavonian mother, married an Urnian Slavonian; his son Igor espoused Olga, whom the same author affirms to have descended from the ancient Slavonian princes.

It is true that, up to this period, if we may judge from the treaty of Oleg with the Emperor Leo, the amalgamation of the two people had not extended to the chiefs; for the names of Oleg's twelve envoys, and of his boyards, are all Scandinavian; but, in the treaty between Igor and the successor of Leo, out of fifty names of Russian envoys, which are affixed to it, three are Slavonian.

Under the regency of the Slavonian and Christian Olga, the credit of the Slavonians could not but increase. It appears even, that Sveneld, one of the most illustrious of her vaiwodes, was a Slavonian. Lastly, which is a very remarkable fact, subsequently to the time of that princess,

the names of all the Grand-Princes are Slavonian! From that period, full of the Slavonian blood which had been infused into them, and finding themselves more masters of the Slavonians, than they were of the intractable Varangians, these Grand-Princes preferred the richest, the most civilised, and the most numerous of the two people, as well as their language and their milder climate: this is proved by the choice of their residence, and by their first codes.

The Slavonians, therefore, as well as the Varangians, ended by considering the descendants of Rurik as their natural and legitimate sovereigns. The two people were united in the same fidelity. The fear of their common enemies, the hope of pillage which drew them under the same standards, and their union, in 988, in the religion of Christ, accomplished the rest.

This passion for plunder was also one of the principal causes of the immense and premature growth of the Russian empire. At that period, the rallying cry of the barbarous nations was the spoil of the Roman empire. As soon as a leader had boldness and resources to undertake an expedition against Byzantium, all the tribes rushed to join his standard. The effect of this was, to begin the coalescence of so many different nations, to lead from the conquered country all its turbulent youth, and to keep their fiery spirits occupied till it was broken-in to the new yoke.

The army which, in 904, Oleg led against Byzantium, is known to have been eighty thousand strong; and that of Igor, his successor, was swelled, in so short an interval, to four hundred thousand. Even the Patzinacites, those natural Tartar enemies of the Russians, united with Igor as soon as the object was to plunder Byzantium. It is, therefore, not in the least astonishing to see the Princes of Kief venture upon such enterprises, since they placed them

at the head of the tribes which were combined for their accomplishment.

CHAPTER VI.

BESIDES, among these Grand Princes, such was the state of circumstances, that every thing had a perpetual tendency to aggrandizement. Their forces were kept up by the Varangians, who hurried to replace those who died, or were glutted with booty.

As fresh swarms of barbarians were incessantly arriving, and as, in a country which they looked upon as their conquest, they did not bend their conduct to that moderation which their prince required of them, he was under the necessity of waging continual wars, to find employment for their restlessness and their avidity.

So difficult was it for them not to treat Novgorod like a captive, that we find the Novgorodians, who paid them, compelled, by their excesses, to massacre them; and Vladimir to despatch towards Byzantium, to meet a certain death, those identical Varangians who had seated him on the throne of Kief. Because they had taken that capital, they considered all the inhabitants as their slaves, and wished them to pay a ransom: a proceeding which did not accord with the views of the Russian prince, who was no longer desirous to reign merely over an army, but to be the sovereign of all the conquered nations.

It must especially be remarked, that, up to this period, the government of the Varangians, like that of all the other Normans, had been only a species of feudality, or rather a military government, that of a barbarian army, rudely

disciplined, established amidst its conquests: thus, chiefs and soldiers wished to be always conquering.

When Igor, being advanced in years, was anxious for repose, his companions, or Faithful Band, his guard, in fact, according to the annalists, forced him to go to war. Their rude luxury did not restrain them; the leaders had governments, or rather cantonments, to acquire,* and all these adventurers had an eye to the booty and the tributes with which they enriched the magazine of the prince, or of the secondary leaders at whose expense they subsisted.

From the complaints of the warriors of this Igor, it appears that, like the German princes, the Russian princes furnished their Faithful Band with clothing, arms, horses, and provisions. “We are naked,” said to Prince Igor his companions and guards, “while the companions of Sveneld have beautiful arms and fine clothing. Come with us, to levy contributions, that we may be in abundance with thee.”†

Every year, the Grand Prince left Kief in November, with an army, and did not return till April, after having visited his cities and received their contributions. When the magazine of the prince was empty, and the annual tributes were not sufficient, there was a necessity for finding other enemies, on whom to impose other tributes,‡ or to treat as enemies the tribes that had submitted: this

* The Chronicle says of the Prince of Polotsk—“He came from beyond sea with Rurik, and had Polotsk under his sway. Rurik subjugated Novgorod, and portioned out among his warlike leaders the cities which depended on that republic. Rurik gave the city of Ischora to his wife Efanda, who, as some say, was the sister of Oleg: the Uglitsch and their tributes were given to their conqueror the vaiwode Sveneld.”

† See Karamsin, vol. i. page 193.

‡ It was for this reason that the faithful band, or guard, of Igor, compelled him twice to march against Byzantium, and twice against the Drevlians.

latter case happened to Igor with the Drevlians, who, being driven to extremity, massacred him, and the whole of his guard. This barbarian had not called to his assistance any of his vaiwodes, or lieutenants, because he did not wish to share with them the fruit of his extortions.

This vassalship without fiefs, similar to that of the ancient Germans, created a perpetual necessity for fresh conquests. As the empire increased in magnitude, the prince assigned such and such a district to such and such a chief, with the condition of maintaining the warriors who were his followers. These divisions, cantoned in this conquered country, subsisted only on the tributes, never quitted their arms, and overawed by their presence, or by periodical visits, the subjugated provinces. It is for this reason that the tribute from Byzantium, under Igor, was shared among the cities where there were dukes. Witness Constantine Porphyrogenitus promising to deliver to the Russian envoys the tributes destined for Kief, Tschernigof, Pereiaslaf, and the other cities.

With such men and such manners, this empire could not fail to increase the more, from the circumstance of the military government (the only one which is practicable for an extensive territory peopled by barbarians) being unknown among the Slavonians, who had dwelt here from time immemorial, and among whom no conqueror had ever taken up his abode. This is why, before the time of Rurik, no great empire could be formed here; and why, as we have seen, he found the country divided into small insulated republics, and easy to be conquered.

On this point let us remark, that this division was that of every primitive people. From this we may conclude, that the Slavonians were the first inhabitants of central Russia. When we find a great empire in existence, we must look to foreign nations for its founders.

But in closing this review of the principal causes of such a prodigious and rapid aggrandizement, we must admire all that was done by Providence to elevate this empire, and in how opportune a manner it produced great men, to found, to consolidate, to extend, and to raise it up again when fallen.

Here let us consider the duration and the spirit of their reigns; two objects which, in the establishment of great dynasties, are worthy of serious attention.

Rurik reigned seventeen years, Oleg thirty-four, Igor thirty-seven; which afforded to the Slavonians sufficient time to become Russians.

Oleg was a great man, who, from Novgorod to Byzantium, which he compelled to ransom itself, acquired so much glory, that his new subjects looked upon him as a magician.

Rest became necessary to the nation; Igor, and then Olga, reigned more pacifically. Their new subjects were on the point of revolting; the celebrated vaiwode Sveneld restrained them.

The Russians were, perhaps, about to sink into lethargy; a prince, a ferocious warrior, Sviatoslaf, inspired them with his own fury, and restored to them all the roughness of their ancient manners.

Oleg had transferred the seat of government from Novgorod to Kief; this Sviatoslaf, attracted by Byzantium, determined to give it a still more eccentric direction, into Bulgaria.* Had he succeeded, his successor would have gone yet farther; and Rurik, instead of being the founder of a mighty empire, would have been nothing more than the principal leader of one of those vast and transient irruptions of the Northern barbarians, who, till their extinc-

* Western Bulgaria, the ancient Mœsia.

tion, wandered over and ravaged the world. But, in the Greek emperor Zimisce's, Sviatoslaf met with a hero as pertinacious as himself, and with far more talent; and the Russians, repulsed, and confined within the limits of Russia, were compelled to establish themselves there.

By another piece of good fortune peculiar to this empire, there had hitherto, at each accession, been only a single heir to the throne, and consequently no opportunity for a partition. The state, therefore, was enabled to gain coherence at the outset; but, in 973, it was on the verge of being broken up by a civil war, the result of Sviatoslaf having divided it between his three children. Fortunately, Vladimir, the most talented of the three, had Novgorod and the brave Varangians for his portion; they made him master of the whole empire, which he raised to the summit of its Gothic glory, and rendered Christian.

Russia, however, was irrevocably ruined by the new breaking into fragments among the twelve children of that prince? Not so! Again it chanced, that Yaroslaf, the most capable of them all, had Novgorod and the valiant Varangians for his share; for the second time they united in a single hand the whole of the empire, of which Yaroslaf was the father and the legislator.

But that prince again partitioned the state among his offspring; and Providence, tired of perpetually raising up this wretched empire, at length abandoned it to its evil genius.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Russian empire, under Vladimir and Yaroslaf, attained the summit of its Gothic greatness. To form a right estimate of its expansion, let us cast a glance over the reign of those sovereigns.

In 980, Vladimir conquered the throne by fratricide; he retained it, for thirty-five years, by glory.

His sceptre, or his sword, stretched to the Ouralian mountains, towards the Caspian, into Taurida, and over Gallicia, Lithuania, and Livonia.

This lascivious despot had six wives and eight hundred concubines, by whom he had those twelve sons among whom he partitioned the empire. He did violence with impunity to his female subjects, though this is the rock on which tyrannies usually split: Rogneda, Princess of Polotsk, whose family he had massacred, he brutally compelled to marry him.

Nevertheless, his rude greatness, and the rumours of his great warlike exploits, awakened the attention of the neighbouring religions: four of them hastened to contend for his conversion: but Vladimir rejected Mahometanism, because it interdicted wine, which, he said, "was indispensable to Russians, and was their delight;" Catholicism, offered to him by the Germans, he disliked, because of its pope, an earthly deity, which appeared to him an unexampled thing; and Judaism, because it had no country, and because he thought it neither rational to take advice from wanderers punished by Heaven, nor tempting to participate in their punishment.

But, at the same time, his attention was fixed by the Greek religion,* which his ancestress Olga had followed, and which had recently been preached to him by a philosopher of Byzantium. He summoned his council, took the opinion of his boyards, of the elders of the people, and deputed ten of them to examine those religions in distant lands, even in their native temples.

Hitherto, notwithstanding their Beli-Bog and their Tcherni-Bog, (white god and black god,) and whatever they might have gathered from the followers of Zoroaster and of Odin, it is affirmed that the Slavonians had not even dreamt of the existence and perpetual struggle of a good and an evil principle; with different denominations, these pagans had a mythology similar to all others; that is to say, they had not only deified their passions, but also their tastes, and the chief objects of their hopes and fears.

The envoys of the Grand Prince, meanwhile, plain downright men, went forth, and returned; Mahometanism and Catholicism they had seen only in poor and barbarous provinces, while they witnessed the Greek religion in its magnificent metropolis, and adorned with all its pomp: they did not hesitate. Instantly convinced, Vladimir marched to conquer priests and relics at Cherson: having done this, he, by his threats, extorted from the Greek empire a princess, whom he married, and became a Christian.

* The Greek schism began in 857, when the patriarch Photius excommunicated Pope Nicholas I., because the Roman Church ordered fasting on Saturday, allowed milk food in Lent, cut off the first week from that season of mortification, forbade priests to marry, and permitted them to shave their beards; and, lastly, maintained that the Holy Ghost proceeded not only from the Father, but also from the Son. The other differences consisted in administering the sacrament in both kinds, in baptism by immersion, and in the Greek liturgy, and the whole of its service, being in the vulgar tongue.

Playing the tyrant to Heaven as he did to earth, his pagan divinities, those divinities which he had formed entirely of gold, and fattened with Christian blood, he now stripped for the sake of Christ, like disgraced favourites : he went still further ; he ordered them to be dragged to execution at the tails of horses ; they were loaded with blows by his guards, and were thrown into the Dnieper.

The prince who thus treated the gods of Russia, was not more forbearing towards the men ; he commanded them to become Christians on a certain day and hour : he commanded, and whole tribes were pushed on like flocks, and collected on the banks of rivers, to receive the Greek baptism. One crowd succeeded to another, and to each of these, in mass, was given the name of a saint. He next carried to excess the virtues of Christianity, as he had formerly carried the vices of Paganism ; he wasted the revenues of the state in alms, in pious foundations, and in public repasts, to imitate the love-feasts of the primitive Christians ; he no longer dared to shed the blood of criminals, or even of the enemies of the country.

From this exaggeration, however, he was soon reclaimed ; and he then founded cities, into which he transplanted his savage subjects. He established schools, to which he compelled the principal Russians to send their children : for his power appears to have been unbounded.

This rough-hewn Colossus has a claim to a page of history, since to him Russia is indebted for a religion entirely spiritual, for its first seeds of instruction and civilization, for its highest degree of Gothic glory.

But he undid every thing by the partition of the empire among his offspring. Yaroslaf, one of them, refused to pay him the tribute of his principality. His revolt caused Vladimir to die of grief ; it punished him for his portioning out the empire in appanages.

This fault, however, was so pertinaciously repeated, subsequently to the period of that Grand-Prince, that we must look for the cause of it rather in the manners of the times, and the necessity of circumstances, than in the improvidence of such men.

These partitions were indispensable. A city was given to a prince to make provision for one part of his subsistence; another city for another part of his expenditure: there was no other means of providing for the objects.

And, besides this, as the military leaders, such as Rogvolod of Polotsk, Sveneld, and the dukes, who are mentioned in the early treaties with Byzantium, were possessed of fiefs, or governments, it was not natural that the princes of the blood should remain without them. It would even have been more dangerous to leave such large and distant portions of power in the hands of men who were not related to the dynasty.

This may induce us to believe, that the massacre of the family of Rogvolod by Vladimir, and the brutality by which that prince compelled the sole surviving heiress to marry him, arose from the circumstance of that family, only allied to the Ruriks, having already converted Polotsk into an hereditary fief.

Besides, what could have been done with the Russian princes of the blood? Were they to be forced to live in the court, and at the charges of the Grand-Prince, without any command, and merely as subjects of the first rank? But, at that time, this would have been contrary to the nature of things; and is practicable only where long experience and advanced civilization have made the general interest predominant. Could these princes be shut up in seraglios? There were none in Russia; their existence there is impossible. The climate stimulates too much to all kinds of activity; it is hostile to effeminacy, and to a contempla-

tive life: what gratification could they possibly afford? Those seraglios were looked upon there as intolerable prisons. What, then, was to be done? Was the genealogical tree to be pruned in every generation? Were the princes to be lopped from it like useless branches? But neither did the climate prompt to such extreme means; the spirit of Christianity, too, which was then in all its fervour, was repugnant to them. This spirit had a much more powerful influence over the thinking people of the North, than over the impassioned people of the South, and of that East whence it came, but where it could not remain.

Sviatopolk, the successor of Vladimir, did, however, in 1015, conceive such atrocities. But, as a plurality of wives, and licentiousness of manners, had multiplied the princes of the blood;* as, also, the appanages, and the vastness of the territory, kept those princes at a wide distance from each other, his attempts on the lives of his brothers could not be simultaneously executed: one of the intended victims escaped, and by him Sviatopolk was punished.

This was Yaroslaf; he hurled him from the throne. That throne, however, loaded as he was with a triple fratricide, the monster re-ascended by a parricide; by laying open, for the first time, the heart of his country to the attacks of the Poles. But then, thinking his sway firmly established, he wished to rid himself by treachery of his allies, who, abandoning him to his own resources, allowed him to fall for the second and last time, and to die of fear, while he was flying from the avenging sword of Yaroslaf.

Of the nine earliest princes of this first dynasty, and first period, this is the fifth great man. His reign began

* Witness Sviatopolk, who made no distinction between his bastards and his legitimate offspring.

by the sword ; but it was not with the splendour of the sword that it was to shine. Yet, with a single blow, he destroyed the Patzinacites. It is known, too, that he made himself felt by Finland, Livonia, Lithuania, and Bulgaria : for a moment, he inspired even Byzantium with dread. But the majority of these expeditions was entrusted to lieutenants : little glory was reaped from them ; the last even terminated disgracefully the wars of the Russians against the Greeks.

At the same time, after the Novgorodians had twice replaced Yaroslaf on the paramount throne, we see him again precipitated from it by the efforts of his brother Mstislaf : but this prince of Tmutaracan stopped him midway in his fall ; he generously restored to him one half of this empire, the immensity of which is sufficiently indicated by Novgorod and Tmutaracan,* the original appanages of these two princes.

Seven years of a singular good understanding succeeded to the short contest between the warrior and the legislator ; after which the death of Mstislaf left Yaroslaf sole possessor of this shapeless and colossal empire. It was, then, not to the genius of war that he owed his power and his renown ; it was to a genius of another kind. In Yaroslaf the Wise, Russia especially reveres its first legislator, the founder of the liberty of Novgorod, the creator of a great number of cities.

It admires in this prince the disseminator of instruction and of civilization. It was he who caused the Holy Scriptures to be translated into Slavonian : with his own hand

* Novgorod, whose possessions bordered on the Baltic : Tmutaracan, the key to the confluence of the Sea of Azof with the Black Sea. See the inscription discovered in the isle of Taman, under Catherine II., and the dissertation by Muschin-Puschkin. See also Levesque, and Karamsin.

he transcribed several copies of them. Russia is indebted to him for many schools, and, among others, for that in which three hundred young Novgorodians were educated. Its history still tells of the throng of Greek priests whom he invited, the only teachers that could then be given to the people.

It applauds his toleration of the Ingrian and Livonian idolaters; his enlightened protection of the women of Suzdal, who were accused of sorcery. These hapless females were about to become the victims of a people exasperated by famine, which they attributed to their magical incantations; he saved them; for his piety was as free from superstition and weakness, as it was possible to be in that age.

The Russian church owed to him a momentary freedom, which his children renounced. Undismayed by the thunders of the mother church, it was he who resolved that the appointment of Russian bishops, and their councils for the election of metropolitans, should be independent of the patriarch of Byzantium.

Already Russia rises from its long obscurity: Vladimir and Yaroslaf have made it European by their conquests towards the West, by religion, by the seeds of knowledge, and by their alliances; the daughters-in-law of Yaroslaf are Greek, German, and English princesses; his sister is queen of Poland; of his daughters, one is queen of Norway, the second, queen of Hungary, the third, queen of France.*

Yet a code for the empire is still wanting, and that, too, it receives from Yaroslaf.

* The consort of Henry I.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is chiefly in the codes of barbarians that we must look for their history. The earliest Russian code was written about the year 1018, and, in the first instance, for Novgorod alone.

From this, however, we are not to conclude that no laws existed before the time of Yaroslaf, a circumstance which is impossible, as, prior to the reign of Rurik, there were large commercial cities. Besides, there are traces of them in the treaties concluded by Igor and Oleg with Leo and Constantine. But we know that, before the conquest of it, Slavonia was divided into numerous hunting, pastoral, agricultural, and commercial tribes, each of which had its laws or its usages. The Russians came, commingled under their dominion all these tribes, and, likewise, their laws and customs, and blended with them something of their own Scandinavian laws.

It appears that neither the one nor the other were written; and as the first Grand-Princes did not perplex themselves with attempts to make them harmonize; as they thought of nothing but conquering, and estimated their power solely by their warriors, and the tributes which those warriors gained for them;* this occasioned a confusion of the laws and customs, in which many of them were lost,

* When Sviatoslaf was intending to establish himself at Periaslaf, he said, "The Greeks supply me with gold, costly stuffs, rice, fruits, and wine; Hungary furnishes cattle and horses; from Russia I draw honey, wax, furs, and men."

and such sinister consequences, that Yaroslaf was compelled to frame an ordinance, to prevent the most grievous anarchy from ruining the city of Novgorod, which was the only one that was left under his sway.

This event was, no doubt, the immediate cause of the code, and, particularly, of the very remarkable charter of the Novgorodian franchises.

The chronicle of that period says, that, in 1018, Novgorod, being driven to despair by the Varangians, did justice for itself by slaughtering them; that the irritated prince avenged this violence by the massacre of the principal Novgorodians, whom he had inveigled into his palace; but that at this moment was spread the news of Svíatopolk's triple fratricide; that, then, Yaroslaf, threatened by his brother, and finding himself without guards, and deserted by his subjects, sought the latter, and threw himself weeping into their arms, which they stretched out to him without retaining any animosity, which they employed on his behalf, and by means of which they twice raised him to the supremacy of the empire.

Without some explanation, this fact is wholly improbable. That Yaroslaf may have softened the Novgorodians by his repentance, is possible; but that he should instantly have converted them into an army most devoted and persevering in his cause, is not credible, unless we suppose an interchange of benefits, a compact, in short, between the Prince and his people. Besides, the epoch of the revolt, of the vengeance and the reconciliation, agrees with the date of the franchises which Yaroslaf conceded to the Novgorodians, and with that of his code.

This code is remarkable. It is despotism which promulgates it. "Respect this ordinance: it must be the rule of your conduct. Such is my will."*

* Leclerc.

Its two first enactments, according to Leclerc, or, according to Karamsin, its first, constitute the law the public avenger only in default of private vengeance. The law, therefore, came in aid only of the weak ; the strong did justice for themselves. None but the relations of a man who had been slain had a right to avenge his death. The law did not even regulate judicial combats ; this is being not merely barbarous, but absolutely savage.

This same law distinguishes several classes. If no avengers exist, it says, the murderer shall pay into the treasury of the state the double fine (eighty grivnas) for the murder of a boyard, or a thiun of the prince ; forty grivnas for the murder of a free Russian, whether Varangian, or Slavonian, a soldier, or a scribe, a husbandman, a merchant, whether native or foreign, and perhaps also for the murder of a hired man, for the latter was still free.*

The life of a female was estimated at only half the worth of a man's,† a brutal law, and well worthy of that barbarous period in which strength was above all things respected.

For the murder of a slave, nothing was to be paid to the treasury ; all that was required was, that the value of him should be paid to his owner, if he had been killed without a sufficient cause ; that is to say, without the slave having insulted a freeman.

This value was estimated according to the occupation of the slave. An artisan, a schoolmaster, a nurse, the superintendant of a village, acting either for a Grand-Prince or for a Boyard, was worth only twelve grivnas, (see the first law ;) just as much as the insulted honour of a citizen, (see

* This seems to be proved by the last paragraph of the third article, according to Karamsin ; and also by the fine for the murder of a female servant, which was eighteen grivnas, twelve of which were taken by the state.

† See, in Karamsin, the third paragraph of the first article.

the third,) or the fine for killing a head of cattle, (see, from Karamsin, the seventh.) Others were valued as low as six, and even five grivnas. That these unfortunate beings were not free, is proved by the wills of several princes, since, at their deaths, they emancipated a great number of them, who could make no better use of their liberty than to sell themselves again.

Perpetual slavery, extending to their posterity, was the lot of all prisoners of war, and of all persons bought from foreigners; slavery, for a limited period, was the portion of those who sold themselves, of insolvent debtors, freemen who, without conditions, married a slave, servants out of employment, hired servants who did not fulfil their engagements; in a word, all the weak who made themselves the slaves of the strong, to obtain subsistence and protection.

The rapidity with which the pest of slavery must have been diffused, will appear from two facts; that, on the one hand, a debtor became a slave, and, on the other, that the legal interest of money was forty per cent.

The second law,* made the district responsible for the public safety within the bounds of its territory, when it could not give up to the prince the murderer, his wife, and his children: a law which was then useful, but which seems to bear out this remark, that, in proportion as civilization is more widely spread, the more its penal justice is brought to act on individuals; and that, in proportion as barbarism exists, the more is that justice compelled to swell the number of collective responsibilities.

The third law,† rates the loss of a member almost as highly as that of life. This marks a hunting and warlike people. On the plucking out a part of the beard, it in-

* Of Yaroslaf, according to Karamsin; but Leclerc attributes it to Isiaslaf, his son.

† The second, according to Karamsin's arrangement.

flicts a fine four times greater than that which it decrees for the loss of a finger. This brings to recollection the importance which the Goths and Germans attached to their hair, and may serve as a proof of a common origin; as may, also, the penalty of loss of liberty for stealing a horse, which is a Saxon law. There existed, likewise, another enactment, which was wholly Jutlandic, both in its spirit and letter; that which prohibited the making use of a horse without the owner's consent. It must be added, that our ordeals by boiling water and red-hot iron are contained in this code.*

The enumeration of the mulcts for blows, seems to have been dictated by a delicacy like our own, with respect to the point of honour; insults are fined four times more heavily than wounds.

From the seventh law,† which appears to compel a Kollegian or a Varangian, and not a Slavonian, to take an oath, it is difficult to draw any conclusion, except that, as in Lombardy and France, each party followed its own usage; that this was the usage of the Varangians; that it could belong only to a decidedly warlike people, and not to a commercial people, among whom other sureties than words were requisite; that, finally, the Varangians were greater barbarians than the Slavonians; for, when justice allows a denial on oath to be sufficient, the oppressed has no other resource than an appeal to arms: a custom which would be the parent of barbarism, if it were not its offspring.

* See Ewers, *das älteste Recht der Russen*, where he proves the resemblance of the ancient Russian law with that of the Germans. See, also, Struve, *Discourse to the Academy of Sciences*, in 1756, though recently refuted in Russia, (*Patriotic Annals*, Jan. 1826,) but without being able to explain the singular conformity of the Russian and Scandinavian laws, otherwise than by assigning to them a common and Germanic origin.

† Translation by Leclerc.

The thirteenth law, according to Leclerc's arrangement, confirms the existence of the three classes, which the second had already indicated; the class of slaves, and that of freemen, which it protects against that of the nobles and boyards, whose violence it seems to apprehend.

These freemen were the husbandmen or farmers, hired servants,* and country landholders; probably, those Onodvortzy, of whom there were still about thirty thousand remaining in the time of Peter the Great; but the majority of the freemen dwelt in the cities. They were divided into centuries, and they chose a chief, who was a kind of tribune. This civil and military magistrate of the people, who bore the denomination of Tyssiatschky, had a guard, and was upon an equal footing with the most eminent boyards of the prince.

As to the nobles, they were doubtless descendants from the Varangian and Slavonian warriors of Rurik and his successors, who had large shares in the conquest; they were the vaiwodes or military leaders, the boyards or direct counsellors of the princes, and the officers of their guards.

Among various regulations relative to inheritances, we observe (law the thirtieth), that the prince was the heir of such free men as died without male issue; but that, in no case, had he a claim to the succession of a boyard, or an officer of his guard: a circumstance which could not fail, in a short time, to produce a nobility exclusively possessed of property.

According to Karamsin, this code neither inflicted corporal punishments (except, indeed, slavery, which includes them all), nor made any difference in the compositions or fines between the Varangians and the Slavonians. But, in the first place, the code of Yaroslaf was not promulgated

* See the twentieth law, in Karamsin's arrangement.

till after the amalgamation of the two people ; and, secondly, as it appears that the prince's guard consisted entirely of Varangians, it will be seen, in the first and thirteenth laws, that the latter were not without their privileges.

The sixteenth law* regulates the *maximum* of what a proprietor, or a possessor, whether of a fief or a freehold, may demand, by the week and by the day, from his farmers ; for the peasant was not then a serf, but a cultivator.

In the various versions of these laws, there is no trace of taxation. The daring refusal of Yaroslaf to his father, the great Vladimir, is the only proof that appanages were bound to pay tribute to the great-principality. It does not otherwise appear, that even the fiefs and estates paid imposts to the Grand-Prince ; the lord or proprietor seems to have had, in his possessions, the same right of customs and tribute that the prince had in his own domain.

All that was not appanage, fief, or private property, belonged to the sovereign. The Grand-Prince, like the lord, subsisted on the fines which he imposed for offences, and on the tribute which he received from his estates : this tribute, as is now the case with Siberia, was paid in kind, where there were no other means of payment, and in money,† where the use of money had been introduced by commerce with Cherson, Byzantium, and Vineta.

The expression tribute is here used instead of revenue, because all this bore the aspect of conquest.

Under this point of view, it appears that the only mark of the lord's dependence—and this may well be called a

* Leclerc's translation ; he attributes it to Isiaslaf, the son and successor of Yaroslaf.

† Karamsin says that money was coined at Kief, in the time of Yaroslaf, which bore his effigy. See also Weydemeyer.

tax—was military service, and that, too, with all its burthensome charges: the lord was bound to join the prince, armed, mounted, supplied with provisions, and numerous attended.

The judges went circuits; on the spot they empannelled twelve respectable jurors, who were sworn, as in Scandinavia, or in Denmark,* since the time of Lodbrog, a monarch of the eighth century.

Several other laws extended protection to moveable and immoveable property; they are so judiciously framed for the interests of commerce, that it is evident they were enacted with a particular reference to Novgorod.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS code sufficed for the enormous empire comprehended between the Volga and the Lower Danube, the Northern Dwina and the Niemen, the Black Sea and the Baltic.

It excites surprise to find in it so many contradictions, and such a disproportion between the penalties; but to what a variety of circumstances and different interests they were to be applied! Doubtless, they were not all enacted at once, nor were the whole of them meant to extend to all classes.

It is, nevertheless, one of the most remarkable monuments of the gothic age. This code, and the franchises

* See Karamsin, who cites Saxo-Grammaticus, (Vol. ii. p. 79.)

granted to the Novgorodians, constitute the glory of Yaroslav. A summary of these franchises will give an idea of those which existed in the Russian cities of that epoch, but with great modifications, resulting from the greater or less degree of power which each of the cities possessed.

The vast importance of that republic is strikingly manifested by the largess which Yaroslav gave to the army that placed him on the throne of Kief. Here, as elsewhere, the degree of consideration enjoyed by the receiver, is indicated by the magnitude of the sum received: ten grivnas to each vaiwode, ten grivnas to each Novgorodian, a single grivna to each Varangian or Russian. The Varangians must, indeed, have declined greatly in consequence since the preceding reign, when they sought to extort a ransom from the Kievians. That nation was now looked upon merely as a nursery of brave men, useful to the Prince, but dangerous to the country: their influence in Russia seems to have ended with the re-establishment of the liberty of Novgorod, and with the reign of Yaroslav.

But it is now time to explain this very predominant power of Novgorod, which we have seen thrice giving the whole of Russia to Vladimir and to Yaroslav. Its republican existence, constantly more worthy of note down to the period of Ivan III. (1480), is a phenomenon in the midst of this land of slavery.

The geographical situation of that city, which at first occasioned its submission to the Varangians, became afterwards the cause of its strength.

In fact, the Novgorodians being, by that situation, out of the reach of the nomades of the south and east, and always attracted towards the north by their commerce, remained stationary, without going, like the rest of Russia,

to be disseminated and lost in the south. This peace in the north, while the south was exhausting itself; the remoteness of the Grand-Princes, after Oleg had removed the capital to Kief; their circumspect conduct towards a city which they looked upon as their asylum; all contributed to give new vigour to Novgorod, and to restore to it its pristine independence.

In consequence, it soon became lord-paramount of Ingria, Carelia, a considerable part of Permia, of Pleskof, and of Torjock. On the north it was bounded by Archangel, on the south, by Twer.

It had a Namestnick, who was usually a prince of the blood, the lieutenant of the Grand-Prince, general of the army, and even judge, but only when his intervention was sought for; a Posadnick, the burgomaster or mayor; a Tisiatski, or Tyssiatchsky, the boyard of the Commons, the tribune of the people, who watched over the proceedings of the Namestnick and Posadnick; boyards, the city counsellors, municipal body, or senate, (all which offices were elective and temporary); Zitieloudié, or proprietors of the first class, out of which the boyards were chosen; and, lastly, the merchants and the people.

This republic, considered as an appanage of the grand-principality, and as a state within a state, entrusted with the defence of the northern and north-western frontiers, had its assemblies of the people, which were convoked by the sound of a famous bell, called vetchevoy: every citizen, without distinction, had the right of voting. The prince was not present at their deliberations. Here were decided, war, peace, the election of magistrates, sometimes the choice of the bishop, and even that of the prince; at least, in a great majority of cases, the approbation of this assembly was necessary.

The prince was not acknowledged till he had sworn to

govern agreeably to the ancient laws of the republic; to intrust the government of the provinces only to Novgorodian magistrates, approved of by the Posadnick; and to attempt no infringement on the exclusive right of the republic to sit in judgment on its own citizens, to tax itself, and to carry on its commerce with Germany.

He also engaged neither to give to his boyards, nor allow them to acquire, any of the villages dependent on Novgorod; not to encourage emigration from among the Novgorodians; not to cause any of them to be arrested for debt; and lastly, to oblige his own boyards and judges to travel at their own expense in the Novgorodian provinces, and to reject the evidence of servants.

It was on such conditions that these haughty and restless republicans allowed the Prince to administer justice, conjointly with judges chosen by themselves.

They paid him no taxes; they merely made him free gifts; they even pushed their pretensions so far as to regulate the hours which their sovereign was to dedicate to pleasure; they expelled several of their princes, and even of their bishops. This liberty, which too often degenerated into licentiousness, was maintained for four centuries, in spite of the distant power of the Grand-Princes. But, transferred from Kief to Vladimir and Moscow, that power, by degrees, acquired concentration as it drew nearer to the republic, and ended, at length, by overwhelming it.

Such were the concessions made by Yaroslaf to a people who had twice been able to send forth forty thousand men to raise him to the throne.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

Second period, from 1054 to 1236.

THUS, as far back as the eleventh century, Russia had a paramount throne, an acknowledged dynasty, a European religion, a code ! it advanced towards civilization at the same pace as the rest of Europe ; and nothing was wanting for it, but to persist in the same noble career, when it stopped short, tottered, and fell. Having, during the first period of its history, witnessed the growth of its rude and barbaric glory, let us seek, amidst the gloom of the second, and in its moral and political situation, the causes of its declension and of its fall.

The time for conquests was gone by. The misfortunes of Sviatoslaf, and his warlike excesses, had excited a disgust of them ; under Vladimir and Yaroslaf, the natural frontiers had been acquired ; in what remained, there was little temptation ; and, besides, the victories of Boleslas King of Poland, and his capture of Kief, showed that the territories to the west offered no easy prey. Internal disturbances, which sprung from the partitions of the empire, subsequent to the reign of Sviatoslaf, called back the attention of the Russians to themselves. Their conversion did not allow of their marching to plunder Con-

stantinople, which was become the metropolis of their religion. Compelled, thenceforth, to think rather of restraining their own subjects, than of conquering those of other monarchs, the Grand Princes, softened by Christianity, and enlightened by the priests, were at length made aware that, to govern their people, it behoved them to give to that people, laws, property, and instruction.

Such was their idea ; their means we have seen ; let us now behold the obstacles and the result.

The commerce of the empire with Asia and with the Greeks ;* the military service of numbers of Russians at Constantinople ; the expeditions, often crowned with success, which were directed towards that centre of civilization by the Grand Princes ; the situation of Cherson, which, in many respects, may be compared with that of Marseilles ; all these were causes productive of improvement. To these must be added, the journey of Olga to Constantinople, and her conversion ; the numerous cities and schools founded by Vladimir and Yaroslaf ; the laws promulgated by the latter ; the many Greek priests and artisans of all kinds, whom they both attracted into Russia ; the seventy years' duration of their reigns, and their ardent efforts to civilize their people ; and, lastly, the slaves whom they brought back from their expeditions, who repopled the country, and, when they were Greeks, enlightened it : all these circumstances, no doubt, must have contributed to the instruction of the Russians, and began to render them superior to their neighbours.

Of this we may form a judgment, from what is said by

* Yakut the geographer : observe the effect of Asiatic civilization on the great Bulgarians of the Volga, who, in the tenth century, from the time of Vladimir the Great, were agriculturists, manufacturers, and merchants, and dwelt in cities built of stone.

contemporaries,* with respect to Kief, (which they denominate the Capua, the Constantinople of the North;) the great wall of brick that surrounded it; its gilded gate, like that of Byzantium; its four hundred churches; its luxury; the rich and splendid dresses worn by its inhabitants; its hot-baths; the effeminacy of its manners, by which the Polish army was corrupted; lastly, its sumptuous feasts, at which were to be found the wines of the Greeks, their silver plate, and even the productions of the Indies. There can be no doubt, also, that the long possession, since the time of Oleg, had softened manners, formed ties, and rendered some duties sacred.

But barbarism, renewed by continual wars, stifled these germs of civilization.

To conceive the difficulties which this empire had to encounter, we must figure to ourselves the capital of the Great Princes in the midst of deserts, where unknown hordes suddenly disappeared from view, to rush forth again incessantly in irruptions as sudden. Surrounded by barbarians, they themselves being wholly barbarous, and reigning over barbarians, on whose obedience, from the few laws, cities, and properties they possessed, they had but an imperfect hold; these Princes found it impossible to govern such distant provinces in any other manner than by traversing them with an army during one half of the year, or by committing extensive portions of them to lieutenants, able to keep in order and defend them. Hence, civil wars between the great vassals; such wars as raised Vladimir and Yaroslaf to the throne; and, as the result of these dissensions, the overturning of esta-

* See Karamsin, and Dittmar of Merseburg, who died in 1018; and, at a later period, Plan-Carpin himself admiring the exquisite workmanship of the rich throne of the Khans, which was made by Russian goldsmiths.

blished fortunes, and their transference into the hands of new men, the offspring of conflicts and revolutions; and, lastly, nascent civilization perpetually exposed to interruption.

The introduction of Christianity, however, was one of the most direct steps which was taken towards that civilization; and if the efforts of Olga, of Vladimir, and of Yaroslaf, had not been thwarted, we are justified in believing that the period upon which we are about to enter would have been less stained with blood.

We must here pay homage to the genius of Christianity: during this second period, it inspired with their noblest actions the numerous descendants of Rurik, among whom Russia was divided; of the best of them it made truly great men; of the wickedest it modified the manners, and sometimes arrested their guilty hands. If Karamsin may be believed, in no family of barbarian princes were there ever seen more violent dissensions and fewer fratricides; although diverted from their religious subtleties by the coarse rusticity which surrounded them, dependent on the sovereigns, and having every thing to lose by this barbarism, the Greek priests, who were the lights of that darksome age, often spoke the sublime language of Christianity.

But how was it possible to civilize barbarians surrounded by barbarians? Olga was not listened to; her son Sviatoslaf even resisted her. When, on her return, after having been baptized at Byzantium, by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, she endeavoured to convert the young warrior, his reply to her was, "I cannot singly embrace this new religion; my companions would laugh at me." A singular remark, which seems to prove that, at all times, ridicule has been the most powerful of anti-religious weapons.

This weapon was too weak against Vladimir; but he

undertook too late his own reformation, and the reformation of others.

There existed other obstacles to the civilization of the Russians; they are to be found in the antipathy with which the despised Greeks and their new religion inspired the minds of the people, against the arts, the sciences, and the manners introduced by these foreigners.

We may believe, also, that the generation which was going off the stage, had the selfishness to wish that it might not be so much surpassed by that which was to replace it. Can those who have declined into the vale of years, bear to hear it asserted, that every thing which has occupied their whole life is but ignorance, barbarism, triviality, and clownishness? Are thus to be lost the rights derived from experience, the sole benefit, and that so dearly bought, which remains to the aged?

Add to this, that, in those barbarous times, the want of a system of tactics, and the nature of the weapons, gave all the advantage to mere physical strength; a circumstance which conferred on the exercises of the body a precedence over those of the mind.

The various sackings of Kief, also, from the time when the partitions of the empire commenced, destroyed to the very root the entire labours of Olga, of Vladimir, and of Yaroslaf.

Against a voluntary and general barbarism, the means of instruction are so feeble, that, far from dividing in order to spread them, the prince is compelled to unite them under his protection: it is necessary that he should first call round him the rising generation, that they may come to seek that instruction, which cannot seek them: this is the reason of civilization being so long confined within the limits of a single city.

Now, we shall see, in this second period of the Russian

history, that Kief, taken in 980 by the Varangians of Vladimir, burned in 1015 by those of Yaroslaf, and plundered in 1018 by the Poles, was captured and re-captured by them in 1069 and 1077; and, lastly, that, after having passed violently from hand to hand for more than a century, it was completely sacked in 1169, and nearly destroyed in 1201.

In the downfall of Kief, of that mother of all the Russian cities, would have been comprehended that of civilization, were not the human mind so adapted to the seeds of it, that, when once they are sown there, they become indestructible.

The Grand-Princedom, however, passed from Kief to Vladimir; the navigation of the Borysthenes, more and more impeded by the Polovtzy Tartars, and others, was forgotten. The Grand-Princes thus withdrew from their civilizers, the Greeks; while, on the other hand, the Greeks withdrew from them, repelled by the civil commotions of Russia.

This is the reason why, about the middle of the twelfth century, (1168) the date of the fall of the second Russian capital, manners became more fierce, or, rather, manners were wholly changed; they were no longer those of Kief, softened by Byzantium, but those of central Russia, still pagan and barbarous, whither the seat of government had recoiled. Judicial combats were then added to the fire and water ordeals; political assassinations and civil wars were multiplied; and to all these elements of confusion was added a singular order of succession. Thus torn to pieces, the empire was laid open to the Poles, to the Hungarians, and, especially to the Polovtzy Tartars, who assisted the Russian princes to devastate it: at length appeared the Mongol Tartars; split into fractions, the state resisted without concentrating its efforts, and was destroyed.

Then, while it was plunged in this abyss, and for several ages, the Tartar invasion poured forth on it the profuse stores of its barbarism, its treacheries, and all the vices of slavery. Robbery, “like a contagious disease, attacked every kind of property.”* Oppression, with its hideous train of hatred, stratagems, dissimulation, gloomy and stern manners, poisonings, mutilations, and horrible executions, established its sway : it extended over the whole country ; it penetrated into every heart, which it withered and brutalized during two centuries.

Such a horrible tyranny rendered legitimate all means of escaping from it ; then, every thing was confounded : the distinction of good and evil ceased to exist ; crime lost its shame, and punishment its infamy. The very name of honour vanished ; fear alone held absolute dominion !

In the second period, upon which we are now entering, at the commencement of the twelfth century, Vladimir Monomachus, that Christian hero, could yet say, “Put not even the guilty to death, for the life of a Christian is sacred.” But, at the close of the fourteenth century, when his spirit again revived in the great Dmitry Donskoy, we find that worthy descendant of the Christian hero of the Russians, under the necessity of re-establishing capital punishments. Very soon, the justice of his successors became more ferocious, either from the Tartar manners having become predominant, or from necessity, in order to render punishment commensurate with crime.

* Karamsin.

CHAPTER II.

ALL this evil had its source in the division of the empire into appanages, an evil which, as we have seen, was inevitable with so many princes of the blood, in such a climate, and among such men ; a system, in short, by which alone it was practicable to govern such numerous tribes, having no means of intercommunication, and dispersed over so wide a space.

During the first period of the Russian history, it has been seen, that the genius of the last two reigns checked the spread of that endemic distemper which was so pernicious to all the states founded by the men of the North. But, on the death of Yaroslaf, this debilitating fever seized on the empire, divided among his five sons. Of the second period, the first twenty-four years, which comprise the reign of Isiaslaf, the son and successor of Yaroslaf, were deeply contaminated by its pestilential influence ; several civil wars broke out, and that prince was twice driven from his throne by his relatives, and twice re-established by Boleslaus II., king of Poland. On his death, another principle of decomposition was superadded to that of the appanages ; the order of hereditary succession, which, though transiently interrupted by the prolongation of Oleg's regency, had, since the time of Rurik, always passed from father to son, then underwent a change. With the consent even of the children of Isiaslaf, Vsevolod, his brother, became his heir, and the order of succession from brother to brother was established.

This is said to have been founded on a custom, for

which the only precedent quoted is the regency of Oleg ; without sufficiently considering that so antiquated a proceeding, and one which had not occurred a second time in the course of a hundred and sixty-five years, could not be in accordance with the national manners.

The Russians may be supposed to have obeyed a natural instinct, which seems repugnant to the submission of an uncle to his nephew ; or, rather, to have wished, by this means, to avoid minorities, or to prevent quarrels between the young princes, who would have more respect for an elderly prince, who was their uncle. The fact is, that, in those simple and rude times, this mode of succession, at once so singular and so pernicious, appears to have originated in a scrupulous and overstrained respect for the right of primogeniture. The appellation of *elder* was held in such reverence, that, down to the close of the fifteenth century, it was sufficient to designate the possessor of paramount authority. Thus we shall see that the direct succession was not re-established, till the Grand Princes of Moscow had secured, beforehand, the recognition of their sons and grandsons, as the seniors of all the other princes. "I acknowledge thee as my elder," was their symbol of submission.

To the same deference for the right of eldership we must also attribute the succession from uncle to nephew, a consequence of the heirship between brothers. The brothers having succeeded each other according to their order of birth, and the last of them being extinct, it was not to his son that the sceptre devolved, but to his nephew ; that is to say, to the son of the eldest brother who had possessed the throne.

From this truly singular mode of succession resulted two fatal consequences. In the first place, a still farther parceling out of the empire into appanages, and new occasions of

civil war. It was quite natural that, during his life, a Grand Prince should strengthen his children against an uncle, who, it was certain, would ere long favour his own offspring, at the expense of his nephews.

This system of parcelling out did not spare even the domain of the crown. It appears that Yaroslaf the legislator left it so powerful, in comparison with the appanages, that he might well believe its paramount influence to be secure and incontestable. But this vast domain was soon subdivided, like the rest of the empire.

This fault was committed by the Grand-Princes themselves; whether it was that they were indifferent as to preserving unmutilated a domain, which, after their decease, was to pass to another branch; or, more probably, that they were interested in leaving it weak against their children, by whom it was not to be inherited; or that they knew not from what other source to provide them with appanages.

The second result of this order of heirship was, the progressive weakening of the power of the Grand-Princes; not only from the want of a solid point of support, in consequence of the domains being thus broken into fragments, but also from the want of an invariable system of government. In fact, always strangers to the Grand-Principality, the princes arrived there from their appanages, with their boyards, men devoted to them, whom they glutted at the expense of the old possessors.* The frequent transference of the sceptre, perpetually disappointing the hopes of

* Among a thousand other instances, see what the Russian historian says with respect to Yury of Suzdal, who thrice usurped the throne of Kief. His favourites, and a swarm of adventurers, who flocked to seek their fortune in his train, trampled as they pleased on the citizens of that capital, and plundered and insulted them. The princes often carried off all the boyards of a city, &c.

the subjects, accustomed them not to attach themselves to any branch of the Ruriks.

On the other hand, as the Grand-Princes did not ascend the throne till they were somewhat advanced in years, the reigns were shorter ; a circumstance which interrupted all plans, and perpetually gave rise to new revolutions, or new systems of government : for the system of government could not be transmitted from brother to brother, and from uncle to nephew, as from father to son.

This order of succession was, therefore, during the second period, one of the main causes of the progressive weakness of the Grand Princes and of the State : so certain is this, that, in the third period, and in spite of the additional calamities produced by the Tartar invasion, we shall see the State again revive with the paramount authority, by the re-establishment of the direct succession in one of the branches of this multitude of Princes.

As to the Russian nobility, we must remark, that, amidst all the quarrels which, in the second period, arose respecting appanages, there is no allusion to them, but only to the Princes. The reason of this is, that the continually conquering movement of the first period, the manners, the mutability of all secondary fortunes in the midst of these revolutions of appanages ; in fine, the scarcity of cities, residences, and strong places, had prevented the Vaiwodes from perpetuating themselves in their commands, as those military leaders had done every where else, at that period. After that, when cities began to be founded, the Princes were multiplied also, and divided them among themselves ; no one even imagined that they could belong to any body but those Princes ; so absolute and exclusive appears to have been, at all times, the devotion to the family of Rurik.

To belong to that race was enough : whether the Princes

were good or bad, the Russians accepted them all. That people allowed themselves to be transferred from hand to hand, divided and subdivided, given and resumed, just as the Princes thought proper.

On its side, the family of Rurik looked upon the State as its property. Listen to one of them, of the name of Oleg, who was summoned, in 1096 or 1097, to the congress of Kief by his kinsmen, and was informed that, at the meeting, the bishops, the ancient boyards, and the most distinguished citizens, were to be consulted. "I am a Prince," replied he, "and am not made to take advice from monks and the mob."

But we shall witness many other examples of the submissiveness of the people, and of the pride of the Ruriks.

This congress, however, which was convoked in 1096, that of the sons of Yaroslaf the legislator, in 1059, for the deliverance of their uncle, and those which were subsequently held, indicate to us the form of government during this second period. It was an assemblage of Princes descended from Rurik,* and having appanages, who recognized the Sovereign of Kief as Grand Prince and Lord Paramount. These Princes often held a congress, in which important affairs were decided, appanages distributed, and high offences judged. "The fault which costs the boyard his head," said one of them,† "costs the Prince his appanage."

* About the year 1150 there were more than seventy-one, all sovereigns.

† Sviatoslaf, in 1176.

CHAPTER III.

NOW, that all these causes of barbarism, of the order of succession from brother to brother, of partitions, of intestine dissensions, and of the exclusive authority of the Ruriks, are appreciated, and that a glimpse has been given of their mode of government, let us revert to the history of the main facts, unconnected with those general considerations, without which we should not have been able to enter into the spirit of them.

We have seen Isiaslaf, the son of Yaroslaf the great, commence the second disastrous period, by twenty-four years of civil war, two depositions, two appeals to foreign intervention for the purpose of effecting his restoration, and by a change in the mode of succession to the throne, which he left to his brother Vsevolod, without any opposition being offered by his two sons.

But what boots it to dwell on the name of Isiaslaf; or that of a Vsevolod, his successor, who reigned fifteen years; or of a Sviatopolk, the nephew of Vsevolod, and son of his eldest brother, who succeeded him, and for twenty years occupied a throne, which was much more an object of envy from the wealth and luxury of Kief, than by the contested power which it conferred! What can we learn from these annals, except that they are filled with outrages, usurpations, violated treaties, and pillagings, either between the Russian Princes, or with the Polovtzy Tartars, or with the Poles and Hungarians? but of these facts, therefore, the major part of which is unworthy of being remembered, we shall select only such as may show us the

colour of the times, and give us a leading and general idea of that epoch.

Now, as early as the opening years of the reign of Vsevolod, about 1084, there rises to view the noble form of his son, of Vladimir Monomachus, the hero of the second period of the Russian history. His first actions were distant campaigns for the redress of injuries. A tutelar genius amidst the crowd of princes possessing appanages, he incessantly hastened to succour the weak against the unjust aggressor ; in their frightful incursions, the Polovtzy always found him the foremost to arrest their progress. The only fact with which he can be reproached is, that he allowed himself to violate his faith with these robbers, who never kept theirs ; that, in truth, he availed himself of treachery against the treacherous, that he betrayed these traitors, and gave them up to the slaughter, while they were slumbering amidst the fruits of their rapine, among which Vladimir doubtless reckoned the treaty which they had recently extorted from him.

But by how many great actions did he not atone for this great error ! When, in 1093, his father died in his arms, which he stretched out to him, and on the rich throne of Kief, which he bequeathed to him, and of which all good citizens implored his acceptance, he refused it. Absurd as was the established order of succession, he respected it, and transmitted the sceptre to his cousin Sviatopolk. " His father," said he, " was the senior of mine ; he reigned first in the capital. I wish to preserve Russia from the horrors of a civil war."

He did more ; during twenty years he persisted in this generous conduct. Remaining a faithful vassal of Sviatopolk, whose guard consisted of only eight hundred warriors, he perpetually hastened to his aid in the unjust wars and imprudent combats in which, notwith-

standing Vladimir's remonstrances and reproaches, the rash monarch involved himself. In fighting for this sovereign, Vladimir lost in the waves a beloved brother, whom he vainly endeavoured to save at the risk of his own life; and he lost even his appanage of Tchernigof, which the flagitious Oleg, his kinsman, claimed as his inheritance, and succeeded in wresting from him.

This Oleg would neither submit to the amovability of fiefs, nor to the congress of 1097, in which the princes divided the appanages between them: he had sworn on the cross to be satisfied with his share, but he, and David his brother, again appealed to the Polovtzy. They perpetually laid open Russia to those robbers; their whole existence was nothing but a tissue of treasons.

Thanks to the influence of Christianity over hyperborean manners, the feudal contests of the Russian princes, not less blood-stained than elsewhere, but stained only with the blood that flowed in battle, had not hitherto, as was the case among other barbarians, been blackened by blood ferociously shed. For nearly a century, Sviatopolk, the fratricide, had remained an insulated monster in an age of discord, by which he had been held in abomination.

Towards the close of the eleventh century, however, the detestable race of the traitor Oleg, with whom nothing was sacred, renewed these monstrosities; his brother David, to whom the public peace, restored by the congress of 1097, was insupportable, framed a plot, slandered Vladimir, and tore out the eyes of one of his kinsmen, whose appanage he coveted.

But this crime, so common in Greece, was unprecedented in Russia, and excited the utmost abhorrence. A new congress of the Russian princes was assembled under a vast tent, and there, too, the genius of Vladimir Monomachus was predominant. "Thou pretendest that thou

hast cause of complaint," said they to David ; " thou art now seated on the same carpet with thy brothers. Speak ; which of us dost thou accuse ?" David, disconcerted, kept silence, and the princes quitted the tent. They mounted their horses ; and held a council, all of them completely armed, as was the custom under alarming circumstances. Then separating, each of them went to consult his boyards ; and David, condemned, and cast out with horror, was deprived of his appanage.

Nevertheless, from the pity of his kinsmen he received four towns and four hundred grivnas for his subsistence ; so much did these descendants of Rurik respect his blood, even when it was most impure ; so much had Christianity softened them since the time of Vladimir the Great, who abolished the penalty of death, and of Isiaslaf, his grandson, who again suppressed it, after it had been restored by Yaroslaf his father.

At length, the death of the infamous Oleg, the last congress in which the influence of Monomachus shone so greatly, his generosity, and his active valour, suspended the civil dissensions, and put an end to new wars against the Poles and the Polovtzy. During the thirty-five years of the reigns of Vsevolod and Sviatopolk, Vladimir, who had refused the sovereignty of Russia, had been its tutelary genius.

But, in 1113, Sviatopolk died, Kief fell into utter confusion, and massacred its Jewish inhabitants, and Monomachus, who was always appealed to whenever the want of order and justice was experienced, was again called to the throne ; but this hero of duty again rejected the sceptre ; he declared that the son of his enemy, the offspring of the perfidious Oleg, had an hereditary title to it.

His high renown, however, his age, and the existing circumstances, triumphed : an unanimous assent and

resolve, and the revolt of the Kievians, compelled him to reign.

For it is remarkable, that he was elected by a general and solemn assembly of the citizens of Kief; this, however, does not establish the rights of the people, there being then nothing fixed: a great man could make infringements in every thing, and procure them to be made. Besides, this prince refused to avail himself of the election, which proves that he did not consider it valid.

At length, however, he yielded; and order was quickly restored by the expulsion of the Jews from the whole of the Russian territory. Vladimir protected their retreat, and made their exile be respected: it has lasted for seven centuries, and Russia still applauds it.

At the same time, the lot of those who were slaves by contract, or for debt, and even that of the perpetual slaves, was ameliorated; the passions, restrained in the interior of the state, were now turned towards external objects, and the civil wars were succeeded by useful wars against the enemies of the country.

In conclusion, this great man left to Russia better laws, and to his children the remembrance of his actions, of which, on his death-bed, he traced the picture, and offered it to them as a model.

“ My dear children,” said he, “ praise God, love men ; for it is neither fasting, nor solitude, nor monastic vows, that can give you eternal life ; it is beneficence alone.

“ Be fathers to the orphan ; be yourselves judges for the widow. Put to death neither the innocent nor the guilty, for nothing is more sacred than the life and soul of a Christian.

“ Keep not the priests at a distance from you ; do good to them, that they may offer up prayers to God for you.

“ Violate not the oath which you have sworn on the cross. My brothers said to me, ‘ Assist us to expel the sons of Rotislaf, and seize upon their provinces, or renounce our alliance.’ But I answered, ‘ I cannot forget that I have kissed the cross.’

“ Bear in mind that a man ought to be always employed : look carefully into your domestic concerns, and fly from drunkenness and debauchery.

“ Love your wives, but do not suffer them to have any power over you.

“ Endeavour constantly to obtain knowledge. Without having quitted his palace, my father spoke five languages ; a thing which captivates for us the admiration of foreigners.

“ In war, be vigilant ; be an example to your vaiwodes : never retire to rest without having posted your guards : never take off your arms while you are within the enemy’s reach ; and, to avoid ever being surprised, be early on horseback.

“ When you travel through your provinces, do not allow your attendants to do the least injury to the inhabitants ; entertain always, at your own expense, the master of the house in which you take up your abode.

“ If you find yourself affected by some ailment, make three prostrations down to the ground before the Lord ; and let the sun never find you in bed. As soon as the first gleams of day appeared, my father, and all the virtuous men by whom he was surrounded, did thus—they glorified the Lord ; they then seated themselves to deliberate, or to administer justice to the people, or they went to the chase, and in the middle of the day they slept ; which God permits to man, as well as to the beasts and the birds.

“ For my part, I accustomed myself to do every thing that I might have ordered my servants to do : night and

day, summer and winter, I was perpetually moving about ; I wished to see every thing with my own eyes. Never did I abandon the poor or the widow to the oppressions of the powerful. I made it my duty to inspect the churches and the sacred ceremonies of religion, as well as the management of my property, my stables, and the vultures and hawks of my hunting establishment.

“ I have made eighty-three campaigns and many expeditions ; I concluded nineteen treaties with the Polovtzy ; I took captive a hundred of their princes, whom I set free again ; and I put two hundred to death by throwing them into rivers.

“ No one has ever travelled more rapidly than I have done. Setting out in the morning from Tchernigof, I arrived at Kief before the hour of vespers.

“ In my youth, what falls from my horse did I not experience ! wounding my feet and my hands, and breaking my head against the trees ; but the Lord watched over me.

“ In hunting, amidst the thickest forests, how many times have I myself caught wild horses, and bound them together ! How many times have I been thrown down by buffaloes, wounded by the antlers of stags, and trodden under the feet of elks ! A furious wild boar rent my sword from my baldrick ; my saddle was torn to pieces by a bear ; this terrible beast rushed upon my courser, which he threw down upon me ; but the Lord protected me.

“ O my children, fear neither death nor wild beasts ; trust in Providence ; it far surpasses all human precautions.”

CHAPTER IV.

By dint of virtue, Vladimir Monomachus gained the mastery of the first part of the second period. Between him and the wicked Oleg and his race, we seem to have witnessed the combat of the good principle against the evil, in which the latter was subdued; but for a moment only; for the good wholly depended on one man, while the evil was inherent in the very nature of things.

Thus, on the death of Vladimir, we behold the vice of feudality and the pernicious law of succession appealed to by the descendants of Oleg, again arm all those princes, and array them, as in a state of nature, against each other. In the thirty-two years that elapsed between the reign of Vladimir Monomachus and that of Andrew of Suzdal, the only two great men of the second period, Russian princes and appanages were indefinitely multiplied. In this short interval, eleven of them, chiefly descendants of Oleg and Vladimir, renewed, with various success, the contest of their fathers: they beset, they besieged, this barbaric throne, and snatched from each other its rude dominion.

At length, towards the middle of the twelfth century, by means of partition on partition, and civil war on civil war, the Grand-Principality had dwindled to little more than the city of Kief. Its paramount sovereignty was nothing but a vain title; and yet, whether it arose from the influence of a name, or that it was still looked upon as the Capua, the Babylon of the Russians, the metropolis of their religion, the emporium of their commerce, the source of their civilization, it is certain that all the anarchy of

the princes continued to be obstinately bent against Kief: the eye becomes bewildered in gazing upon the confusion.

In the midst of it, however, some traces are visible of the struggle between the descendants of Vladimir Monomachus and those of Oleg. The latter, still reprobated by the people, looked for support from the nomadic barbarians of the South; the former sought it from the love of their people and from the Hungarians, who were, at least, equal to the Russians in civilization. From this it would appear as if these lineages, like those of Cain and Abel, had retained the distinguishing marks of their origin.

But, at length, one of the princes possessed of appanages, that of Suzdal, obtained the ascendancy in this chaos. For a short time he even inspired a hope that he would reduce it to order. Like the founder of the third French dynasty, his strength lay in his patrimony. The principality of Suzdal included the present governments of Yaroslaf, Kostroma, Vladimir, Moscow, and a part of Novgorod, Twer, Nijni Novgorod, Tula, and Kaluga. But this vast country, the centre of Russia, was, in the eyes of the prince who reigned over it, nothing more than a cheerless place of banishment. He could see there, he declared, only an inclement climate, uncultivated deserts, gloomy forests, and a people plunged in ignorance. Kief alone could charm him; he made himself master of Kief, or rather, Kief made itself master of him; and there he soon after died, more the victim of sensual pleasures than of the weight of years.

The host of princes who held appanages instantly started up again; again they rushed to seize upon the throne of Kief, carried it by assault, and passed and repassed on it with such rapidity, that the eye is baffled in its attempt to follow them.

One alone, whose youth was that of Achilles, withdrew from this ambitious crowd : it was Andrew, the heir of Suzdal. He viewed that great appanage with very different eyes from his father. " Here," said he, " still abide simplicity of manners, the obedience of the people, and the devoted fidelity of the boyards ; while at Kief, a city which is on the frontier of the Hungarians, the Poles, and the Polovtzy, all is pillage, murder, civil and foreign war."

Thus, while he left the rest of the princes, with all the fury of their passions and of their greedy hands, to tear each other to pieces, and to exhaust themselves round Kief, he regarded it with contempt, and kept himself apart in his patrimony. There he appeared to reflect deeply on the calamities of his country. It was especially in the divergent position of Kief, and in the partitions of the empire, that he discovered the cause of them.

For this reason, in his vast domain, he refused all grants of territory, even in favour of his nearest relations, and commenced a war of extermination against appanages. For this reason it was that he rendered his Vladimir worthy of being the Russian capital ; that he aggrandized Moscow, a creation of his father ; founded around him a number of cities, peopled them with the great Bulgarians of the Volga, whom he had subjugated,* and drew into central Russia, by the attraction of peace, the population of the South, which fled from the horrors of all kinds of war.

At length, in 1168, after having been repulsed by the proud and fickle Novgorod, he bent his course towards

* Andrew did not personally make war after his accession to the throne. This, perhaps, is the reason why, from the date of his reign, the chronicles give the name of *court* to that which they previously denominated the *guard* of the prince.

Kief, against which his armies advanced; it was then, that, taken by storm, despoiled, and degraded, this second capital of the Russians fell, and resigned the supremacy to Vladimir.

In the following year, however, the numerous troops of Andrew, commanded by one of his sons, having under him seventy-one princes of the blood, were again foiled before Novgorod, where reigned a son of the Prince of Kief. Novgorod was at the climax of its power: the emporium of the commerce of Persia and India with Germany, it had been recently admitted into the Hanseatic league. But, though it twice resisted all the forces of Andrew, it yielded to his policy; and the first capital of the Russians acknowledged, like the second, a third city as the metropolis.

Andrew had triumphed in this part of his double combat; but in that of the appanages, custom, backed by too powerful interests, resisted him. Opposed to a single Grand-Prince, whose interest it was to destroy the system, there was a throng of princes, all sovereigns, who must necessarily be anxious for its continuance; and not only those Princes, but also their guards, and the whole of the boyards, that multitude of adventurers retained by each of the descendants of Rurik, all of whom subsisted on this usage and its attendant defects.

The whole of them, therefore, revolted. It was in vain that the brothers and nephews of Andrew, to whom he had refused appanages, were banished, and forced to fly as far as Byzantium; the rest of Russia, divided among his kinsmen, had the upper hand. Kief and Novgorod escaped from his grasp; his armies of fifty thousand men were baffled by an inveterately rooted custom; it was victorious, and the policy of Andrew was under the necessity of being satisfied with an empty homage.

Lastly, in his own patrimony, which, at least, he was desirous to preserve entire and undivided, he was cruelly assassinated by his subjects, and died hated and unavenged.

The fall of this Grand-Prince, and of his plan of attaining order and strength by the concentration of power, took place in 1174; whence it results that this great effort was made too soon, as appears from the resistance which manners opposed to it; and too late with reference to the Tartar invasion, which occurred fifty-four years subsequently. For, even supposing a succession of able Princes, and a series of well-directed efforts, half a century would not have been sufficient to give to Russia, by the centralization of power, all the energy of which she was susceptible, and which, indeed, was indispensable for her safety. All history proves, that such a concentration of power in a feudal state, and in the face of such formidable and hostile interests, has ever been a task of difficult and tedious accomplishment.

Far from persisting in carrying this great conception into effect, the first successor of Andrew weakly allowed to be broken up into appanages the vast domain of Suzdal, which, by its temporary union in one hand, had become the nucleus of empire. The second suffered the Grand-Principality to be disputed with him, by one of the princes to whom he had given an appanage out of his own domain. The third went still farther; he ingenuously declared, that he did not require any homage from the princes holding appanages, and that to God alone were they accountable for their conduct.

Thus, the result of this third change of the capital was, to transport into the middle of Russia the frenzy of civil war, and the breaking it up into appanages, and to remove the centre of government not only from Greece, from its

commerce, and from its civilization, but also from the most European of the Russian provinces. The latter, seeking to obtain some point of support within reach, were not slow in becoming Hungarian, Polish, and Lithuanian. Finally, this change of residence completed the decomposition of the north of Europe, at the very moment when central Asia, united in one mass, and under a single chief, was ready to pour down, with overwhelming weight, upon that unfortunate country.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Third period, from 1237 to 1462.

A GREAT conqueror had now arisen in the vicinity of Russia, at the precise instant when that unhappy country had no other means of defence than the fragments of a power worn out and rent to pieces by discord.

In consequence of this, nothing more was required to crush her, than a single lieutenant of Genghis Khan, and two efforts, one of which was made in 1221, through the defiles of Caucasus, the other, in 1237, on the side of eastern Bulgaria.* The first, which was merely an incursion, cost the victor only one battle; the second, some insignificant combats, but many sieges.

Let us, in the first place, investigate the causes of this invasion, of its rapid success, and of the long duration of this last triumph of Asia; we will then trace the slow and gradual progress of the Russians towards independence.

The principal causes of this great invasion of Europe by Asia, are to be found in the genius of Genghis Khan, who united the Mongols† and Tartars, and in the manners of those two people.

* Or the country of Kasan.

† Mogols, according to De Guignes and Karamsin; and Mongols, according to Malte-Brun, Dopping, and Levesque.

That ambitious Prince could attain greatness by war alone ; he was a barbarian ; he held command over shepherds, who, like their flocks, were compelled to be migratory ; how, in those vast deserts, would it have been possible to keep them dependent on him, elsewhere than in camps ? How could he retain them united in camps, otherwise than by continual conquests ; without which, these shepherd tribes are under the necessity of separating into a multitude of hordes, to find the means of subsistence ? War, perpetual war, therefore, could alone satiate his desires, and give a relish to his power. When he had devoured the whole of Asia, Europe was required.

To say that the Russians had interfered in defence of the Polovtzy, and had murdered the Tartar envoys, who came to propose an insidious alliance, would be to assign a puerile cause for this mighty invasion. Lured, like all their predecessors, by the riches of Byzantium, would these greedy barbarians have passed by Russia without giving her a thought ? Would not Kief, which was almost in their road, and the Greek luxury of the Russians, have been sufficient to attract them ? They had heard of them, in 1221, from the Polovtzy, and in 1237 from the Silver Bulgarians,* whose plundering excursions had made them too well acquainted with the wealth of the Russians. Besides, the Polovtzy and the Bulgarians of the Volga were at war with the Tartars, and the conquest of these by the latter, naturally led to that of Kief and Vladimir.

As to the causes of the rapid success of the Tartars, we must, in the first place, observe, that the circumstance of their pastoral habits preventing them from becoming attached to any country, could not fail to forward the vast and ambitious projects of Genghis Khan. This kind of

* Or Bulgarians of the Volga.

life renders all those people fit for the profession of arms, and keeps them ever ready for action. The nomade nations are armies; irregular, indeed, but easily put in motion, prompt, and always on foot; whatever they leave behind them can be guarded by old men, women and children.

To such nations war is not an event; for long marches produce but little change in the habits of a wandering people: their houses, their provisions, march along with them; and this is of some importance in uncultivated plains and uninhabited forests. The Tartars, therefore, had over the Russians the advantage which standing armies have over hasty levies.

Here, however, we must call to recollection the existence of the permanent guards of the Russian princes, to which must be added those of the cities, though the latter had doubtless less military experience than the former; but the national authors give us to understand, that the permanence of these guards had induced a habit of wholly committing to them all that related to war, and that the people were become unfit for bearing arms.

Add to this, that here, as was the case wherever the Normans established themselves with their military government, there could be no warriors but free men and proprietors; and even from these we must deduct the traders and the clergy. Now, continual wars had so much increased the number of monks, hired servants, and slaves, and so much diminished that of free men and landholders, that there remained scarcely warriors enough to make head against the Polovtzy.

Amidst a ruin and depopulation which was so general, even the guard of the Prince must necessarily lose much of its original strength. It has been seen, that about the year 1100, the guard of the Grand-Prince consisted of only

eight hundred men, and that he lost it. Hence it happened that, with the exception of one battle and some trivial skirmishes in the field, the Tartars encountered no resistance except from the cities, in which all who had fled to them for refuge, peasants, priests, and populace, were converted into warriors by despair.

Even this did not take place till the second invasion: to the first, we see the inhabitants of those cities opposing nothing but processions of priests and of suppliants, which the barbarians amused themselves by trampling under their horses' feet.

Another cause of the nature of this second war, a war wholly of sieges, was, that in barbarous times, when tactics were unknown, an impetuous cavalry must have the superiority in an open country: now, the Tartars being always in the saddle, and being masters of the provinces which produced the finest horses, were the best horsemen in the world. The Russians, on the contrary, were infantry; their guards being overwhelmed, and the rest badly armed and undisciplined, could not keep their ground, except in cities, against such furious cavalry.

The annalists boast much of the obstinate defence made by the cities, the greater part of which suffered themselves to be taken by assault, and destroyed, rather than surrender. The example of the sacking of one city did not deter another from exposing itself to the same fate. In this is supposed to be manifest the same tenacious firmness, even to the death, which now forms a distinguishing feature in the Russian character: it is true, that, as the Tartars gloried in being equally faithless and pitiless, no treaty could be made with, nor any quarter expected from them.

Now, with the reduction which had taken place in the warlike class of the Russians, let us contrast the enormous

magnitude of the Tartar armies. Plan-Carpin, the ambassador sent to Baty by the Pope, saw that Khan surrounded by six hundred thousand warriors, of whom a hundred and fifty thousand were Tartars. There was, at that period, no art which could counterbalance such an astounding disproportion of force. Rubruquis,* who was the envoy from St. Louis to Mangu-Khan, gives us as vast an idea of them.

There were also other causes which gave the superiority to the Tartars. Among the Gauls, as among all barbarians, it was by cries repeated from village to village, that intelligence was transmitted; the more thickly the country was peopled, the more speedily was the news conveyed. In Russia, where the dwellings were separated by deserts, this kind of communication was perpetually interrupted, so that a prince was often surprised in his capital by the enemy; this was a great advantage on the side of an assailant always ready, and so rapid in his movements.

There is reason to believe, likewise, that the Mongols, who were situated so near the mines of Nertschinck, and had become masters of the Oural and the Caucasus, were provided with better arms than the Russians; accordingly, the annalists speak with horror of the long and steeled arrows of those Tartars, of their huge scymitars, of their pikes with hooks, and of those terrible battering-rams, which in one day overthrew the walls of Kief, their strongest city.

Another circumstance which we must figure to ourselves

* This monk was bold to think that he could convert Mangu; but the Khan replied to him,—“The Mongols are not ignorant of the existence of a God, and they love him with all their hearts: there are as many, and more ways of being saved, than there are fingers on your hands; and, if God has given you the Bible, he has given us the Magi, &c.”

is, the sudden organization of these wandering hordes in divisions of ten thousand men, regiments of a thousand men, companies of a hundred men, and detachments of ten men. We must also admire the annual assemblage of all the chiefs in the presence of Genghis ; his sole means of knowing them, of keeping them in a sort of connexion, and of impressing their minds with his authority, throughout so vast an extent : for it was in the midst of deserts that all the splendour of genius burst forth ; it is there, especially, that we witness what can be accomplished by the influence of one man over so many men and events, and even in spite of nature.

Fanaticism had its share. In one of these general assemblies, a prophet had predicted to Genghis Khan, that he would be master of the world. We must also remark, that, among the Mongols, the three highest crimes were adultery, witchcraft, and cowardice ; and that, in fine, men who had such fiery passions, who were so ignorant, and who were bound to risk their lives under pain of death, could not fail to be formidable soldiers.

Besides, it is not very astonishing that the Russians, disunited, should have been overthrown by the Mongols, united to the Tartars. To sum up the whole, the genius of Genghis, the impulse given by him, the confidence which he bequeathed, and the enthusiasm inspired by forty years of victory, are striking causes of success.

These nomadic hordes pushed their conquests as far as into Hungary, and beyond Poland ; but a dearly bought victory in Silesia, and the poverty of Brandenburgh, having disgusted them, they confined themselves to Russia.

Yet, with the assistance of the Polovtzy, the Alans might have defended the entrance of European Russia against the Tartars, who, in the first instance, attacked it by the south-west of the Caspian, and the defiles of Cauca-

sus; but, deceived by offers of friendship, and by the remembrance of a common origin, the Polovtzy abandoned the Alans. As soon as the latter were crushed, and the Caucasus was penetrated, the war fell in turn on the Polovtzy, who, driven to the Dnieper, implored aid from the princes of Kief and Galitsch.

Those princes were aware of their true interest, and united with the Polovtzy. It was then that the Tartar envoys were killed, who came to offer to the Russians the same friendship with which they had lured the Polovtzy. The league of the Russians was imperfect: by a feigned retreat, they were drawn to the banks of the Kalka, near the mouth of the Don. There the Prince of Galitsch was desirous of vanquishing without the help of the prince of Kief, who, on his part, allowed him to be defeated, and was slaughtered in his turn: all the south of Russia was ravaged, after which the Tartars withdrew.

This sketch of their first expedition, in 1221, shows with what prudent and deceptive policy these Tartars prepared for a war which they were to carry on with all the fury of barbarism: what Montesquieu says of the character of Attila well portrays the Tartar character, which, patient and subtle in policy, is implacable and furious in war.

There are yet two additional reasons to be assigned for the general conquest of Russia, in 1237, by Baty, grandson of Genghis, and Khan of the Kaptchak. In the first place, famine, a plague, the earthquake of 1230, and a paroxysm of intestine dissension, had weakened the Russians; while, on the contrary, the pacific reign of Zuzi-Khan, had prepared the Kaptchak; secondly, the Grand Prince of Vladimir, (Yury,*) was an idiot, who never thought of forming an alliance with the Bulgarians, and

* Or George.

allowed himself to be beaten in detail. As he was solely occupied in adorning the churches, perpetuating mendicancy by alms, and fattening the monks, he believed that God would do the rest.

With respect to the infamy of the Russian princes, who, at the outset, mutually deserted each other; who, as we shall see in the sequel, next employed themselves in completing the work of tearing each other to pieces on their ruins; and who ended with choosing Baty as the arbiter of their quarrels; and with respect, likewise, to the establishment, on the Russian frontier, of the great Tartar empire of Kaptchak,† which extended from the north of the Caspian to the banks of the Don; these were causes, not only of the successes of the Tartars, but also, of the duration of their supremacy in Russia.

CHAPTER II.

THAT the duration of this conquest may cease to astonish, it is necessary to examine all that contributed to consolidate it. Luxury, which is especially destructive of conquering empires—luxury wished to have a seat; uninhabited and uncultivated plains repelled her, and the Khans of Kaptchak, of Astracan, of Kasan, and of the Crimea, long drew from their wandering hordes a swarm of soldiers, ready to engage in any enterprise, having little

† Kaptchak, or the Golden Horde, a Khannat, which, according to Levesque, was comprehended between the Volga, the Yaik, and the Don; and, according to De Guignes, extended much farther towards the north-east of the Caspian. It is even believed, that the Sir, or ancient Jaxartes, was its boundary.

to lose, every thing to gain, and nothing to leave behind them.

Their number was kept up by the slaves which they captured ; they enrolled, under their standards, their vanquished enemies, and thus made their conquests supply the means of conquering.

In Russia, however, the difference of religion, of climate, and of manners, became an obstacle. They could govern it only from a distance, and as paramount sovereigns. It was necessary for them to have armies there, to oppose the Lithuanians, the Swedes, and the Livonians, their common enemies ; for those three people, combined with the Hungarians and the Poles, had risen at once against Russia, and rushed upon that fallen prey. But the Tartars not being men to be retained in a country, the climate of which was repugnant to all their habits, they left the Russian princes there, to reign and to fight for them. This addition of European wars, which began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, weakened the Russians, and thus contributed to the continuance of the Tartar yoke.

Here might be enumerated the famines, which were a consequence of the Tartar invasion and of Russian improvidence ; and next, the endless dissensions between the Russian Princes, and in the republics ; but all these causes of the long endurance of slavery were equally the causes of the conquest.

From the spot where Kasun now stands, to as far as Vladimir, the seat of the Russian empire, the Tartars destroyed every thing ; such was their custom. Why should a pastoral and migratory people have spared the cities ? Pasturage was all they stood in need of.* This solitude flattered their pride and insured their safety.

* See, in 1223, the assembly of the Mongol chiefs, several of whom proposed to Genghis-Khan to massacre all the inhabitants of the con-

Could they allow to be left in their rear a population which might have become an army; armies being then the same thing as the population? This is a result of barbarous manners, which, under another form, seems likely to be re-produced by our new system of invasive war, a system that, threatening at once the whole of a nation, compels the whole nation to rise in its own defence.

In conclusion, they, like all similar barbarians, made war upon walls; for to such tribes, walls are objects of hostility; at home, because they are in opposition to their manners; among their neighbours, because they are an obstacle to their violences.

The deserts which these Tartars made, and which would have stopped the progress of any other than a nomadic people, were no impediment to them. Their horses found pasture in them, and horses were every thing in their eyes.

But the principal end which the Tartars had in view, in thus spreading destruction, was to root their power deeply by terror; for, as soon as they had produced the desired effect, they treated with honour the Russian princes who applied to them, though, at the same time, they enfeebled them by insidious partitions. They founded Sarai,* and then Kasan, and thus established themselves in the vicinity of their conquest.

After Baty, Burgai caused a general census of the Russians to be made. He sent governors (baskaks) with forces into each principality, imposed taxes, and placed a governor general on the frontier.

He prohibited, under pain of death, the plundering of

quered countries, in order to convert those vast and populous regions into pasturage. (De Guignes, vol. iii. edit. in 4to.)

* Capital of the Kaptchaks: according to Abulgasi, a Tartar prince and historian, it was situated on the Volga, north of Astracan.

the monasteries ; he exempted the priests from all tribute. He did not fear to augment their temporal power, that he might secure in his interest their spiritual power, of which they knew better how to make use. In the disgracing of the princes of Kief and of Vladimir, who had recognised the Pope, we seem to see the care the Tartar displayed to defend the Greek religion which he did not profess, but of which he knew the ascendancy over these tributary tribes, and which he considered as a barrier between Russia and the rest of Europe.

The weakening of the feudal tie in Russia had facilitated the conquest ; the policy of the Khans completed the unloosing of that feudal tie. They themselves collected the tribute of each ; they received the homage and the appeals of every prince ; and, when they committed the fault of re-establishing a Grand Prince, they allowed several rivals to lay claim to this paramount sway, made them wait their decision, and sometimes retained them at their horde for two whole years. At the same time, they prevented the settling of any order of succession. In a word, they made themselves lords paramount ; for, at the outset, they adopted the plan of not permitting any prince, great or small, to assume the government of his states, before he had journeyed to the great horde, to solicit the investiture.

The effect of these journeys, to accomplish which a year was barely sufficient, was to leave the principalities without Russian chiefs, and under the authority of the Tartar baskaks ; to prove the supremacy of the Grand Khans ; to make these Mongols acquainted with what kind of men they had to deal ; to ruin the competitors by the customary presents ; and, lastly, as accusers of the princes were never wanting among their kinsfolk and rivals, to make them dread the terrible vengeance of the Khans, in

case of their having to reproach themselves with so much as a sigh for independence.

Several princes were summoned to the great horde, tried, and executed. But these Tartars, who thus cruelly punished the insubordination of the Russian princes, joined with them in their foreign wars; they even served them in their civil wars. This was the manner in which they did so: a Russian prince journeyed to the horde, to impeach the Grand Prince, in whose place he prayed to be substituted; and he returned with a Tartar army, which permitted him to reign over ashes and blood.

The granting of these succours was not always dictated by policy. The Tartars, like the Huns, ravaged without conquering; it was tribute and slaves that they required. Had they wished to govern their conquests, they could not have plundered them; a habit which it was impossible for them to relinquish. The tribute was for the Khan, the plunder for the horde; it was necessary, from time to time, to satisfy this craving for prey.

For the mass of the Tartar empire was composed of such incoherent parts, that war, which destroys every thing, was its only means of preservation; it was indispensable to its existence, because it bound together the whole of these scattered tribes, by directing all their interests, and all their passions, towards one object.

As it is only by convulsions that a body verging on dissolution can manifest its strength, so was it only in the violent state of war, that this empire resumed its collective form. What other vehicle than a burning and impetuous fever, stimulated by all the most fervid passions, could have circulated with rapidity enough to animate and move at once all the gigantic members of this enormous empire? Nothing but the renown of a victor, the cry of war, was sufficiently powerful to make itself simultaneously

heard through all the parts of a dominion, which were so remote from each other, and dissevered by vast deserts.

Accordingly, no sooner did that war-cry cease to be loudly heard; no sooner did the Khans, exhausted or glutted with blood, and fixed by luxury in cities which could not, like the tent of Genghis, be removed to a distance, seek to enjoy at home the repose of which they had robbed the world, than their sway was narrowed to their slaves and the cities, and the insubordination of the hordes convinced them how little consistence there was in an empire composed of so many wandering nations, and of such various and conflicting interests.

CHAPTER III.

WE have seen Asia, when rallied, surprise and subjugate disunited Russia; we are now about to see Asia falling to pieces in its turn, and Russia, after having successively banded together all its people, at length avenging its injuries. But, in reverting back to the right path, it imitated the slow and methodical progress of nature, who so slowly and methodically composes that which she so rapidly decomposes.

The habitude of war, which accustoms to recognize no other law, no other virtue, than force; the want of order in the succession to the Khanship; the facility with which the chiefs of wandering hordes could revolt; the indispensable necessity, in a too extensive empire, of entrusting large portions of it to lieutenants; the rebellion and the conquests of the Nogays, in 1259; the ravages of Timur, in 1380: all these causes contributed to the disunion and

enfeebling of the Kaptchak, which may be dated, particularly, from the middle of the fourteenth century, after the reign of Usbek, more than a century posterior to its foundation.

I speak here only of the empire of the Kaptchak, one of the five divisions of the great empire of Genghis-Khan. The latter subsisted but forty years in its complete state. Of its brief duration we need seek no other cause than its immense extension; for a man may, indeed, devastate the world, but it can be governed by God alone.

The first successors of Genghis-Khan, however, claimed nothing less than the possession of the whole earth, which he had bequeathed to them by will.* For the conquest of Europe they assigned eighteen years. But, of these arrogant beings, Octay, the first after Genghis, died by poison; an event which probably contributed to postpone the impending invasion of Constantinople, Vienna, Dresden, and Berlin. The second, Gaiuk, or Kaiuk, held the throne but transiently; Mangu, the third, sustained reverses; and Kublai, the fourth of these pretended sovereigns of the world, could not even make himself master in his own territories.†

We have seen the causes of the Tartar invasion, of its success, of its permanence, and also the first principles of the dissolution of the Tartar empire. We are now to trace the progress of the Russians towards their independence.

In the first place, we remark that the Grand-Princes, and even the Princes holding appanages, were obliged to journey to the abode of the Mongol Khan, to obtain the right of governing. As these journeys took up a year, the authority of the princes at home, during so long an absence, remained weak, fluctuating, and uncertain. But,

* See Plan-Carpin.

† See Abulgasi.

ere long, the Kaptchak, or Golden Horde, threw off its dependence on the Mongol Khan, and the Russian princes had then to travel only to Sarai to solicit the crown.

On the other hand, nearly at the same epoch, and in the Kaptchak itself, thus severed from the great Mongol empire, another dismemberment took place. Nogay, one of its warriors, a conqueror from the north of the Black Sea, rendered himself independent. As early as 1262, or 1266, his revolt against the Golden Horde affording to the Russians some hope of recovering their freedom, they massacred the Tartars who resided among them. No long time after, in 1281, a Grand-Prince, Dmitry, even opposed these Nogays to the Kaptchaks, and re-established himself by their influence.

These beginnings of division among the conquerors, however, weakened them, at the expense of Russia alone, which served as their field of battle, and the prize of their victories.

But that which excites surprise is, that there still existed a Grand-Prince at that epoch. While Baty and Burgai were completing the conquest of Russia, chance so ordered it, that Alexander Nevsky, one of the sons of the Grand-Prince of Vladimir, and, consequently Prince of Novgorod, was a great warrior and statesman. He rebuilt and repopled numerous Russian cities; heroically defeated his European enemies, the Teutonic knights and the Lithuanians, and recovered the Neva from the Swedes; and won the good will of the Tartars, whom he considered as too formidable to be attacked.

By the same chance it happened, that, at the very time when Alexander gained the esteem of the Khan, the Prince of Kief drew upon himself the hatred of the Tartars and Russians, by submitting to the Pope; and Andrew, Prince of Vladimir, marrying the sister of this Prince of

Kief, and refusing to pay the Khan his tribute, involved himself in the same disgrace with his brother-in-law. All these principalities the Khan gave to Alexander Nevsky; some authors are of opinion that he even aided him to seize upon them.

But the Russians were not disposed to submit either to the Tartar yoke, or to the sceptre of the Grand-Prince; so that Alexander's whole life was spent in vanquishing his people, in punishing or pardoning their revolts, or in hurrying to intreat forgiveness for them at the feet of the Khan, whom they were perpetually insulting. He died the victim of his toils, but remained immortal in the hearts of his subjects, who canonized him; his virtues restored in the minds of the Russians the paramount supremacy of Vladimir.

This Grand-Principality was, it is true, long a subject of discord held out to the ambition of the Russian princes, and, while they contended for it with their own sword and that of the Tartars, the Khan ruled it with sovereign sway.

If it chanced that one of these princes ventured to attack the Grand-Prince, without having appealed to the Tartars, and even in spite of them, it was because success would procure for him riches, with which he might conciliate the Tartar governors and the Khan himself; but this success was uncertain; and the Russian princes at length perceiving that a journey to the Horde decided the possession of the crown, war became thenceforth useless. Very soon, therefore, it was only at the Horde, and to acquire an ascendancy in the mind of the Khan, that they contended with each other; fewer civil wars occurred, the Tartars were more rarely called in, and Russia had time to breathe.

The Khans committed a serious fault in preserving a Grand-Prince; it was a still more striking one, and a con-

sequence of the first, to place in his hands a sovereignty disproportioned to those by which he was surrounded, to select him for too long a time from the same branch, and to give him armies to establish himself, and the means of seducing even themselves by the most costly presents.

...The consequence of this was, that the princes who held appanages, dared not enter so readily into a contest with the Grand-Princes, who were already more powerful than they were, and were so formidably supported; not daring to contend with them, they turned their arms against each other, and thus enhanced by their own weakness the strength of the Grand-Princes.

CHAPTER IV.

NEVERTHELESS, till 1324, that is, for a century posterior to the Tartar invasion, the power of the Grand-Princes was doubtful; but then, amidst the crowd of pretenders to the Grand-Princedom, two rival branches made themselves conspicuous, and the other princes of the blood resigned to them an arena, in which the scantiness of their own resources no longer permitted them to appear.

One of these branches was that of the Princes of Twer; the other that of the Princes of Moscow.

The Princes of Twer (about 1300,) succeeded to the Grand-Principality of Vladimir; it devolved to them in the order of the succession; they resided at Twer. If we consider the position of Moscow between Twer and Vladimir, and the fickleness of the Novgorodians, we shall perceive why it was impossible that the Grand-Princes of Twer could ever extend their power beyond the limits of

their patrimony. In fact, the Prince of Moscow, whom the situation of his appanage made the rival of the Grand-Prince of Twer, and who could cut off all communication between Twer and Vladimir, had only to win over Novgorod, in order to reduce the Grand-Prince within the bounds of Twer ; and this was what actually happened.

Moscow, however, as being the weakest, must have fallen, but that one of its princes, Yury,* married, in 1313, the sister of Usbek-Khan. It was then that, after having excited the hatred of the Novgorodians, in persisting to subdue them by means of the Tartars, Mikhail of Twer drew down upon his head all the wrath of Usbek, by defeating Yury, and taking prisoners his wife, who was the Khan's sister, and Kavadgi, a Tartar general, who came to put the Prince of Moscow in possession of the Grand-Princedom.

For Usbek, after having preferred and supported the rights of Mikhail of Twer to the Grand-Principality, had changed his mind in favour of Yury of Moscow, who was become his brother-in-law. The anger of Usbek, however, was still remaining suspended, when his sister, the wife of Yury, and the prisoner of Mikhail, expired at Twer. Yury hastened to the horde ; he accused Mikhail of having poisoned the princess. The humiliated pride of Usbek lent itself to this base calumny ; he entrusted to Kavadgi the investigation of the affair. Mikhail appeared to the summons ; the vanquished passed sentence on his vanquisher, whom he caused to be put to death ; and the infamous Yury of Moscow was appointed Grand-Prince, in the place of his murdered rival.

His triumph was short : being accused of withholding the tribute due to the Khan, he journeyed to the horde, and was assassinated by the son of his victim.

* Or George.

This vengeance restored the Grand-Principality to the branch of Twer, in the person of Prince Alexander. It remained in it for three years; but then, in 1328, this madman caused all the Tartars at Twer to be massacred. To the brother of Yury, Ivan I. surnamed Kalita,* Prince of Moscow, Usbek immediately gave Vladimir and Novgorod, the double possession of which always distinguished the Grand-Princedom.

This concession formed, in the hands of Ivan, a mass, the connection of which Twer, weakened as it was, did but little diminish. Consequently, with this power, and the troops that Usbek added to it, Ivan speedily compelled all the Russian princes to combine, under his orders, against the Prince of Twer; who, after having undergone various misfortunes, was executed with his son at the Horde.

Here begin the two hundred and seventy years of the reign of the branch of Moscow. This first union of the Russians, under Ivan I. denominated Kalita, constitutes an epoch; it shows the ascendancy of this second Grand-Prince of Moscow over his subjects; an ascendancy, the increase of which we shall witness under his successors; and for which, at the outset, this branch of the Ruriks was indebted to the support they received from the Tartars.

For, as a word from the Khan decided the possession of the throne, whichever of the two rival branches of Moscow and Twer displayed at the horde the most shrewd and consistent policy, that branch was sure to triumph. It was not that of the princes of Twer which thus acted. On the contrary, they sometimes solicited the protection of the Khans, and sometimes fought against them; we have even seen one of them ordering the massacre of the Tartars in his principality.

The Princes of Moscow pursued a different system;

* Or the Purse.

they, no doubt, detested, as much as their rivals did, the yoke of the Khans; but they were aware that, before the Tartars could be contended with, the Russians must be united, and that it was impossible to subject and unite the Russians without the assistance of the Tartars. They therefore espoused the daughters of the Khans, manifested the utmost submission to the Horde, and appeared to be wholly devoted to its interests.

Now this policy, which, at the commencement of the Mongol invasion, acquired for Alexander Nevsky the empire of all Russia, gave it, seventy-four years later, still more completely to Ivan I. : for the sway of the Tartars was then more recognized; the Russians were more docile to their yoke; and the cities which composed the Grand-Principality, were more powerful in themselves, and also by comparison with the rest of Russia, which became daily more and more exhausted.

CHAPTER V.

THE wealth of Ivan I. was another cause of the extension of his power.

The complaints of the Prince of Twer, in 1323, prove that Yury I. Grand-Prince of Moscow, when he undertook to execute the vengeance of his brother-in-law Usbek against Twer, was also entrusted with the collecting of the tributes; which, however, he retained, instead of sending them to the Horde.

Ivan Kalita, his son and successor, profited by this example. It was thus, that by making themselves lieutenants of the Khan, the Moscovite Grand-Princes first became the collectors, and finally the possessors, of the taxes

throughout the whole of Russia. It was thus that they succeeded to all the rights of conquest enjoyed by the Tartars, and to their despotism.

There can be no doubt, that one of the most copious sources of power to those sovereigns, was the periodical censuses, and the perpetual imposts, so alien to feudality, and especially to a feudality of princes: imposts and censuses which nothing but the Tartar conquest could have established, and which were inherited by the Grand-Princes.

Already, in the first half of the fourteenth century, these taxes had rendered Ivan Kalita rich enough to purchase entire domains and appanages,* the protection of Usbek Khan, and the preference of the Primate, who removed his residence from Vladimir to Moscow, by which means the latter city became the capital of the empire.

This prince was collector for the Tartars: it was by virtue of this authority that he practised extortion upon his subjects. In 1377, we see him requiring a double tribute from the Novgorodians, under pretext that such was the will of the Khan.

Armed against the Russians with the dread inspired by the Tartar name, and against the Tartars with the money of the Russians, he, in his frequent journeys to the Horde, intoxicated with gold and adulation the Khan and his courtiers; it was then that, as lord-paramount, he brought about the first union of all the appanaged princes against his competitor, the Prince of Twer, whom he drove from Pskof and from Russia, by the assistance of the thunder of the Primate, which the church then made heard in the empire for the first time.

Already, as is the case with immense masses in nature,

* In the governments of Novgorod, Vladimir, Kostroma, and Rostof, and the cities of Duglitsch, Bielozersk, and Galitsch.—See Karamsin, and an act of Dmitry Donskoi.

his power produced its effect—it exercised its attraction; the nobility imitated the clergy. Either from fear, or from avidity, several boyards of other princes rallied round this Grand-Prince, preferring the fiefs of so rich and so potent a lord-paramount, to those of the petty princes whom they abandoned.

Ivan Kalita pushed forward with horrible vigour in his ambitious career. “Woe, woe to the princes of Rostof!” exclaims Nikon, “because their power was destroyed, and every thing was concentrated in Moscow.” In fact, from the Kremlin,* which he fortified, Ivan proclaimed himself the arbiter of his kinsfolk; he reigned in their principalities by the medium of his boyards; he arrogated to himself the right of distributing the fiefs, that of judge, that of legislator; and if, indignant, those princes resisted, and dared to wage against him a *war of the public good*,† he hurried to the Horde, with purse in hand, and denunciation on his lips; and the short-sighted Usbek, deceived by this ambitious monster, was impolitic enough to disembarass him of the most dangerous of his competitors, whom he consigned to frightful torments. The Prince of Twer and his son were the most remarkable victims of this atrocious policy.

At the same time, Lithuania, which, from the period of the first overwhelming of Russia by the Tartars, had emancipated itself from its yoke, was now become a conquering

* Kremlin, originally Kremnik, from kremen, fire-stone. See Karamsin, and the Chronicle of Treitski. The Kremlin, in fact, is situated on a very rocky hill.

† From 1333 to 1339, the princes who held appanages espoused the cause of the Prince of Twer against the Grand-Prince of Moscow, whom they called a tyrant. In 1339, the Grand-Prince of Moscow returned to the Horde, and so terrified Usbek-Khan by his denunciations against the Prince of Twer and other princes, that the Khan immediately summoned them to the horde, in order to restrain, or get rid of them.—See Karamsin.

state. About 1320, Guedimin, its leader, seized on the Russian appanages of the south and west, which had long ceased to be dependent upon the Grand-Principality of Vladimir. Kief, Galitsch, Volhynia, became sometimes Lithuanian, sometimes Polish or Hungarian: driven to despair, their inhabitants emigrated; they formed the two military republics of the Zaporovian and Don Cossacks. Rallying around them the unfortunate of all countries, they were destined to become one day strong enough to make head against the Turks and Tartars, between whom they were situated; and thus to embarrass the communication between those two people, whom a common religion, origin, and interest, conspired to unite.

The Grand-Principality was, on the other hand, repopled by unfortunate fugitives from the southern Russian provinces, who sought refuge at Moscow.* The empire, it is true, lost in extension; but it was thus rendered more proportionate to the revived power of its Grand-Prince, who had also fewer competitors in it: those who remained could not, in point of resources, be compared with the Grand-Principality. After all, it was much better that the latter should one day have to recover some provinces from a foreign foe, than from its domestic enemies: it was suffering an external evil instead of an internal one, which is the worst of all.

Thus, the machiavelism of Ivan prospered. It is true, that, by the confidence with which he inspired the Horde, and the terrible war which he waged against his kinsmen, he restored to Russia a tranquillity to which she had long been a stranger. A dawning of order and justice reappeared under a sceptre acquired and preserved by such horrible

* See the emigration of Rodion, and of seventeen hundred Kievan followers of boyards, who, about 1304 or 1333, sought an asylum at Moscow.

acts of injustice; the depredations to which Russia had been a prey were repressed; commerce again flourished; great marts and new fairs were established, in which were displayed the productions of the East, of Greece, and of Italy; and the treasury of the prince was swelled still further by the profit arising from the customs.*

Such were the rapid effects of the first steps which Ivan took to execute the system of concentration of power; this great political impulse was so vigorously given, that it was perpetuated in his son Simeon the Proud, to whom Ivan left wherewithal to purchase from the horde, in his turn, the Grand-Princedom, and in whom he revived the direct succession. Accordingly, Simeon effected, against Novgorod, a second union of all the Russian princes. It is to be remarked, that he was obliged to cede one half of the taxes to his brothers; but, at the same time, he reserved to himself the whole authority, which soon gives to its possessor the mastery of the revenue.

Simeon having died without children, Ivan II. his brother, purchased the sovereignty with the wealth of Kalita. After Ivan II. this system and this order of succession were, indeed, transiently interrupted in the person of a prince, alien to the branch of Moscow; but we shall soon see the great Dmitry Donskoi establish them as fixed principles; that prince did not neglect to increase the wealth† of his grandfather Ivan. The people had given to Ivan the surname of The Purse; as much, perhaps, with

* See Kamenevitch, (translated by Karamsin) describing the great mart of Mologa on the Volga, where the commerce of Asia and of Europe met in the seventy inns of its Slavonian suburb; and where seven thousand two hundred pounds weight of silver were collected for the treasury of the prince.

† See the treaty of Dmitry Donskoi with Vladimir his uncle, who promised to pay to him the tribute of his appanage, which bore the name of the Khan's tribute; and the second treaty with the same

allusion to his treasures, as to the purse, filled with alms for the poor, which is said to have been always carried before him.

At a later period, the constantly progressive riches of the Grand-Princes of Moscow enabled them to enfeoff directly from the crown-lands three hundred thousand boyard-followers; and next, to keep up a body of regular troops, sufficiently strong to reduce their enemies and their subjects.*

This system of concentration of power which Ivan Kalita commenced, by means of his wealth by the union of the sceptre with the tiara, and by restoring the direct order of succession; his horrible but skilful machiavelism against the princes holding appanages; finally, the fifty years' repose which, thanks to his policy, and to their dissensions, the Tartars permitted Russia to enjoy; these are the circumstances which, next to Alexander Nevsky, entitle Ivan to be considered as standing second among the most remarkable Grand-Princes of the third period. It was he, who had the sagacity on this stubborn soil to open and to trace so deeply the path which led to monarchical unity, and to point out its direction so clearly to his successors, that they had nothing to do but to persevere in it, as the only safe road which it was then possible for Russia to follow.

This concentration of power brought about great changes, from 1320 to 1329; as, at that epoch, all the Russian princes in concert solicited from the Horde the recal of the

Vladimir, by which the latter prince engaged that his boyards should pay to Dmitry the same tax which the Grand-Prince might think proper to impose on his own boyards.

* It was thus that, in France, in 1445, Charles VII. took advantage of the exactions of the English, and of the terror which they inspired, to render perpetual the temporary taxes, and to keep up a permanent corps of twenty-five thousand men.

Tartar governors. It was then that, more firmly fixed, the throne of the Grand-Princes became the rallying point of the Russians: along with the consciousness of their strength, it inspired them with a public spirit which emboldened them. This good understanding was, in reality, an effect of the ascendancy which a direct and sustained succession, in a single branch of the Ruriks, had already given to it over all the others.

CHAPTER VI.

IN fact, sometimes natural justice, sometimes oriental negligence and cupidity, often, the fear of being disobeyed, and lastly, and especially, the power and riches of the Princes of Moscow, whose presents always surpassed those of the other princes; all these motives had induced the Khans to allow the succession to the Grand-Principality to descend regularly from father to son in the branch of Moscow.* This natural order of succession Dmitry Donskoi, in

* Usbek, it is true, with machiavelian policy designated all the children of Ivan I. as his successors; but, in 1340, he allowed Simeon, the oldest and ablest of them, to make himself sole master of the throne. Ianisbek-Khan nominated Ivan II. the brother of Simeon, after his death and that of his children, to the exclusion of a prince of the branch of Twer or Nevsky. A Prince Dmitry, of the Nevsky branch, who had been made Grand-Prince by a whim of Naurus-Khan, was deposed in 1362, by Murath-Khan, who chose Dmitry Donskoi, grandson of Ivan I. and son of Ivan II. Taktamuisch also gave the throne to Vassili II. the eldest son of Donskoi (1389). Lastly, Ulu-Mahomet nominated Vassili III. son of Vassili II. and father of the Great Ivan III. whom this long succession rendered so powerful that he completely crushed the Horde.

1389, established by a treaty, in which his kinsmen consented to renounce the mode of succession from brother to brother.

It was one of them, and the most remarkable, Vladimir the Brave, who was the first to sign this act. In several other conventions, Vladimir acknowledged himself the vassal and lieutenant, not merely of Dmitry, but also of Vassili his son, and even of the son of Vassili, when he was only five years of age.*

This example, set by a prince who, of all the possessors of appanages, was the most renowned for his prudence and his valour, was followed by the others. Thus, like our Capetians, did Ivan I. and particularly Dmitry Donskoi, begin the monarchy by restoring the direct succession, in causing, while they lived, their eldest son to be recognised as their successor. We shall soon see Vassili, son of Dmitry, persevering in this practice. Lastly, Vassili the Blind, his grandson, raising up his tottering throne, and preparing the autocracy of the fourth Russian period, by associating with himself his next heir, the great Ivan III.

It is easy to conceive the infallible effect of this order of succession, and with what promptitude it must necessarily have extended and consolidated the power of the Grand-Princes. In fact, the ideas of the father being transmitted to the son by education, their policy was more consistently followed up, and their ambition had a more direct object; for no one labours for a brother or nephew as for his own children.

The nobles could not fail to attach themselves more devotedly to a prince, whose son and heir growing up amongst them, would know only them, and would recompense their services in the persons of their children; for, the necessary consequence of the succession of power in the

* See Karamsin.

same branch, was the succession of favours and dignities in the same families.

Even before Dmitry had established the principle, the boyards saw the advantages which this order of succession held out to them. Here, as elsewhere, the fact preceded the law. This was the reason of their restoring the direct line in the grandson of Ivan Kalita; it was they who made him Grand-Prince at the age of twelve years, and who subjected the other princes to him. We shall see them, in the same manner, about 1430, maintain this order of succession in Vassili the Blind. Contemporary annalists declare that these ancient boyards of the Grand-Principality detested the descent from brother to brother; for, in that system, each prince of the lateral branch arrived from his appanage with other boyards, whom he always preferred, and whom he could not satisfy and establish but at the expense of the old.

It was thus that the most important and transmissible places, the most valuable favours, an hereditary and more certain protection, and greater hopes, attracted and held around the Grand-Princes a military nobility. In a very short time, their elevation to the level of the humbled petty princes, flattered their vanity, and completed their junction with the principal authority.

This circumstance explains the last words of Dmitry Donskoi to his boyards, when he recommended his son to their protection. "Under my reign," said he, "you were not boyards, but really Russian princes."

In fact, (to cite only some examples,) we see that his armies were as often commanded by boyards as by princes, and that, from this epoch, it was no longer a prince of the blood, but a boyard of the Grand-Prince, who was his lieutenant at Novgorod.

Nay more, when the succession from father to son was

once established, there were, at the very beginning, two minorities, (those of Dmitry, and of Vassili, his grandson,) during which the boyards composed the council of regency, governed the state, and were the equals, and even the superiors, of the princes who held appanages. This will explain, why, in 1392, the boyards of Boris, the last prince of Suzdal, gave up him and his appanage to Vassili Dmitrievitch of Moscow. The motive is to be found only in their interest; as the Grand-Prince of Moscow entrusted them with the government of the appanages, and thus substituted the nobles in the place of the princes.

A very remarkable circumstance, with respect to Dmitry Donskoi, is, on the one hand, the energy with which he subdued those princes, and, on the other, his circumspect treatment of his boyards. According to Karamsin, it is more especially to their pride and jealousy of the *tyssiatsky** of Moscow, (the boyard of the city, *or of the Common*, a sort of civil and military tribune, elected by the people,) that we are to attribute the abolition of that office by Donskoi. During the preceding reign, another *tyssiatsky* of Moscow, who claimed precedence of even the boyards of the Grand-Prince, had been murdered by them.

When this hereditary protection afforded by the Grand-Princes of the Moscow branch was once fairly established, the nobles of each appanage, who constituted its army, had thenceforth an asylum, and, as it were, a tribunal for redress, to which they could appeal whenever they were dissatisfied with their prince. It was this which made Twer fall before Ivan Kalita; for the sovereign prince of that first and last rival of Moscow, having preferred to his boyards the people of Pskof, who had defended him, the former withdrew to Moscow.

* *Tysiatchky*, according to Levesque and Karamsin.

The power of Ivan Kalita being once raised by the Tatars' aid, and by the re-establishment of the direct line of succession, and thoroughly developed by his son and grandson, Simeon the Proud, and Dmitry Donskoi, it followed, as a natural consequence, that he who was most able to reward and to punish, drew round him, and retained, the whole of the nobles. Those nobles constituted the sole strength of the princes holding appanages; their defection, therefore, completed the subjugation of these princes.

Accordingly, Dmitry Donskoi was, in reality, sovereign, as is proved by his treaties with the princes who held appanages, all of whom he reduced to be his vassals. And, accordingly, notwithstanding the appanages which he gave to his sons, and the dissensions which arose out of that error—an error as yet, perhaps, unavoidable—the attachment of the nobles, for which I have just assigned a reason, always replaced the legitimate heir on the throne.

CHAPTER VII.

ALREADY, so early as about 1366, the Russian Princes could no longer venture to contend against their lord-paramount by any other means than by denunciations to the Horde; but to what Khan could they be addressed? Discord had created several: what result was to be hoped from them? Divided among themselves, the Tartar armies had ceased to be an available force.

The journeys to the Golden Horde, which had originally contributed to keep the Russian princes in awe, now served to afford them an insight into the weakness of their enemies. The Grand-Princes returned from the Horde with the confidence that they might usurp with impunity; and

their competitors with envoys and letters, which even they themselves well knew would be of no avail.

It was then obvious in Russia, that the only protecting power was at Moscow: to have recourse to its support was a matter of necessity. The petty princes could obtain it only by the sacrifice of their independence; and it was thus that all of them became vassals to the Grand-Prince Dmitry.

Never did a great man arise more opportunely than this Dmitry. It was a propitious circumstance, that the dissensions of the Tartars gave them full occupation during the first eighteen years of his reign:• this, in the first place, allowed him time to extinguish the devastating fury of Olguerd the Lithuanian, son of Guedimin, father of Jagellon, and conqueror of all Lithuania, Volhynia, Smolensk, Kief, and even of the Taurida; secondly, to unite several principalities with his throne; and lastly, to compel the other princes, and even the Prince of Twer, to acknowledge his paramount authority.

The contest with the latter was terrible: four times did Dmitry overcome Mikhail, and four times did the Prince of Twer, aided by his son-in-law, the great Olguerd,† rise again victorious. In this obstinate conflict, Moscow itself was twice besieged, and must have fallen, had it not been for its stone walls, the recent work of the first regency of the Muscovite boyards.

But, at length, Olguerd died; and Dmitry, who, but three years before, could appear only on his knees at the Horde, now dared to refuse the Khan his tribute, and to put to death the insolent ambassador who had been sent to claim it.

We have seen that, fifty years earlier, a similar instance of temerity caused the branch of Twer to fall beneath that of Moscow; but times were changed. The triple al-

• From 1362 to 1380.

† Prince of Lithuania.

liance of the Primate, the boyards, and the Grand-Prince, had now restored to the Russians a confidence in their own strength: they had acquired boldness from a conviction of the power of their Grand-Prince, and from the dissensions of the Tartars. Some bands of the latter, wandering in Muscovy, in search of plunder, were defeated; at last the Tartars have fled before the Russians! they are become their slaves, the delusion of their invincibility is no more!

The burst of fury which the Khan exhibited, on learning the murder of his representative, accordingly served as a signal for the confederation of all the Russian princes against the Prince of Twer. He was compelled to submit to the Grand-Prince, and to join with him against the Horde.

Russia now began to feel that there were three important things which were indispensably necessary to her; the establishment of the direct succession, the concentration of the supreme power, and the union of all parties against the Tartars.

Circumstances had been profited by very opportunely; for Mahomet-Khan, who was also disembarrassed of his civil wars (1380), soon hastened with all his forces into Russia to re-establish his slighted authority; but he found the Grand-Prince Dmitry at the head of the combined Russian princes, who destroyed his army on the Don.

Subsequently, however, and even during this reign, there were many civil wars in Russia; Moscow was several times burned by the Tartars. Two years after the victory of the Don, Taktamuisch, a lieutenant of Tamerlane, who was become master of the Kaptchak, surprised and ravaged the Grand-Principality, and rendered it tributary; and Twer once more raised its head. Seventy years later, we still find two Russian princes disputing at the Golden Horde for the possession of the Grand-Principality.

But the two principles destructive of the Tartar empire,—namely, their own dissensions and the power of the Grand-Princes,—continuing to gain ground, acquired the predominance, and ended by sweeping every thing before them. We see the Khans, even after their victories, uniformly concentrating authority in the hands of the Grand-Princes of Moscow, and annihilating themselves by engaging more and more in internal divisions.

Donskoi, meanwhile, had so firmly founded the authority of the Grand-Princes,—he took such prudent steps on his death-bed, and left such an illustrious example, that he seemed to have bequeathed, not his greatness of mind, but his skill and his good fortune to his successor Vassili.

Pliant and patient with his European and Asiatic neighbours, we behold this Prince haughty, and even ferocious and inexorable, to his kinsmen and to his unruly subjects. In his proceedings, circumspect at first, but persevering and inflexible, we discover the aristocratic policy of the council of boyards and priests to which his father had confided his youth.

His triple object was, firstly, to repress the Lithuanians; and as he was the son-in-law of the Lithuanian prince, he combated him rather by policy than by arms; secondly, to liberate Russia from the yoke of the Tartars; and it was by their means that, following the example of his ancestors, he continued the system of re-uniting the appanages to the Grand-Principality; for that was his third purpose, which he deemed it prudent to achieve before he thought of the second.

Like his predecessors, therefore, he journeyed, in 1392, to offer homage to the Horde for his sceptre, to seduce it by dint of presents, and to purchase from it the investiture of seven appanages, of which he had despoiled his kinsmen; their own boyards put them into his hands, and those princes were,

consequently, under the necessity of mingling in the ranks of his courtiers, or of dying in captivity or in exile.

Eighteen years afterwards, when, having lost his old counsellors, and being too eager to enfranchise himself, Vassili drew on his head the wrath of the Khans, by his refusal of the tribute, he promptly reverted to the policy of his fathers, and returned again to the Horde, to ensure, by renewed homage, the concession of so many provinces. Thus whole provinces, dependent on Novgorod, the principalities of Suzdal, and of Tchernigof, were united to the Grand-Principality; and thenceforth the paramount throne was raised to a disproportionate height above the petty thrones by which it was surrounded.

Wars, horrible punishments, and machiavelian policy, all were employed by Vassili to render the proud Novgorod the tributary of Moscow; and, as his power grew with that of the Primate, he strove to subject the republic to the civil jurisdiction of that priest.

At length, in 1425, ending as he began, he closed a reign of thirty-six years, by requiring all the Russian princes to swear that they would hold no correspondence with the Tartars and Lithuanians; he compelled them to acknowledge his son Vassili, then only five years old, as their lord-paramount, and whoever dared to refuse, he expelled from his appanage.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUCH was the political march of these Grand-Princes, from the time of Ivan Kalita.

In 1398, however, the state was more than ever in danger of being irretrievably destroyed, and these princes of Moscow, proud as they might be of their machiavelian skill, were compelled to be thankful to the Russian good fortune for the salvation of their empire.

On its right and on its left arose at once two conquerors, who seemed ready to devour it. On the east, there was Tamerlane; on the west, Vitovt the Lithuanian. Already the first, with his four hundred thousand warriors, had conquered the rebellious Kaptchak; he touched on the Russian frontier: already the second was at Kaluga and at Viazma; he had surprised Smolensk, and penetrated to Novgorod; and Muscovy, trembling, expected to be crushed between these two colossuses, when, all at once, they both turned aside, bent their course to the south, met, and came into collision. Russia, which they had so closely compressed, now breathed again; she arose astonished: on her left she beheld Vitovt, her European oppressor, beaten down before Kutlui, the lieutenant of Tamerlane. She turned towards the victorious east her still terrified gaze, but the terrible Mongol had vanished in the deepest recesses of Asia; he seemed to have appeared solely to inflict a mortal blow on the rebellious Kaptchak, that horde which was fattened with Russian blood and gold. It was thus that discord, passing from the Russians to the Tartars, prepared for the north of Europe a

triumph over Asia, the termination of which it is impossible to foresee.

At the same time, and by an equally propitious fortune, subsequently to Jagellon and Vitovt, Lithuania and Poland came to blows; these other enemies of Russia rent each other to pieces: like the Tartars, they exhausted their own strength; their sterile dynasties were interrupted; a democracy of nobles gained the upperhand; and the sceptre became more and more elective; while that of the Grand-Princes, in spite of the faults of Vassili the Blind, the son of Vassili, struck deep root, by means of its divine right, and of its direct succession, and became more flourishing by the length of the reigns.

This longevity of the Muscovite Grand-Princes was another very remarkable cause of the prodigious growth of their power. It is not to our age that it is needful to say, why the length of the first reigns of a dynasty is indispensable to the establishment of the authority of that dynasty. Let us, with reference to this head, remark those of Ivan Kalita, and his lineal descendants, Simeon the Proud, Dmitry Donskoi, Vassili his son, and Vassili Vassilievitch his grandson; they were of thirteen, seventeen, twenty-seven, thirty-six, and thirty-seven years; this was enough to found the paramount sway of the Grand-Princes of Moscow.

In the succeeding period, we shall see this longevity increasing, like the power, in their successors Ivan the Great, Vassili, and Ivan the Terrible, whose reigns were of forty-three, twenty-eight, and forty-nine years. So that, when the reign arrived of Vassili Vassilievitch, the last prince of this period, so rooted was the custom, of acknowledging as Grand-Prince no one but the eldest son of the Grand-Prince, that this Vassili succeeded

his father when he was ten years old ; and although he was several times dethroned, the habit of respect and of fidelity always replaced him on the throne. After such protracted reigns, the rights of the sovereign were marked out, the path traced for his successor, and the habits of his subjects formed.

Nevertheless, on the birth of this Vassili Vassilievitch, a miracle was deemed useful, to ratify more fully his right to the throne of his father ; this new-born prince was proclaimed Grand-Prince by a voice from heaven. The precaution, however, appears to have been quite supererogatory ; the first event of this reign is a proof of its being so : it stands alone in history.

Yury, the uncle of the young sovereign, making an appeal to the ancient order of succession, laid claim to the throne. An excommunication by the primate, which he at first despised, but which an unexpected pestilence rendered efficacious, suspended the enforcement of his pretensions, which, however, were renewed as the contagion diminished ; and Vassili and his uncle proceeded to dispute for their rights before the Horde ; but the blinded Khan was so completely influenced by the address of the boyards who accompanied the Grand-Prince, and so carried away by the general impulse, that he declared for the lineal heir, released him from all tribute to the Horde, and even decreed that the uncle should hold the bridle of his nephew's horse, on the entrance of the latter into his capital. But from this decision the ambitious Yury appealed to arms ; Moscow, taken by surprise, fell into his hands, and his nephew Vassili was exiled to an appanage.

Would it not appear as if the lineal succession were again overthrown, and that a long and furious war would be required to restore it ? Not so ; the manners of the time,

—respect for the lineal order—that custom founded on the general interest, and already existing for eighty years, were sufficient to secure its triumph; and that, too, in the course of a few days, without a single sword being drawn, or a drop of blood shed. Public opinion, disarmed as it was, yet stronger than a victor, was victorious over his victory: priests, people, nobles, all disavowed him; all, even the son of the usurper, abandoned his cause. The entire population of the great Moscow followed the lineal heir into his banishment; the conqueror, struck with dismay, remained alone; and, vanquished by this terrific insulation, he descended from his solitary throne, and restored it to the legitimate heir.

The errors of Vassili, however, subsequently precipitated him twice from the throne, first into the fetters of the Tartars, and next, into those of the son of Yury, who tore out his eyes in retaliation; but legitimacy always triumphed by its inherent strength, even in spite of this blind, imprudent, and unfortunate Grand-Prince, whom it perpetually raised up again.

The son of Yury, was, indeed, speedily deserted by his nobles; they replaced Vassili the Blind on the throne. The usurper was vanquished, pursued, despoiled; he died of poison administered by his own followers, and Novgorod, which had given him an asylum, was compelled to ransom itself.

Thus, the Tartar yoke was broken; the humiliation of the possessors of appanages was consummated; that of the Russian republics of Novgorod, Pskof, and Viatka, was commenced; the paramount sway was established; and the lineal succession, which began *de facto* under Ivan Kalita, acquired the force of a right under Dmitry Donskoi, was rendered, both *de facto* and *de jure*, incontestable, at the close of the long reign of Vassili the Blind,

when the force of public opinion had obstinately overthrown his last competitor, and when, after having given birth to the great Ivan III. he associated him in the government of the empire.

CHAPTER IX.

BUT, in this great work of autocracy, has there not been obvious the powerful and persevering hand of the priests? It is, then, in the spirit of the history of the Russian church, that we must seek for a final cause of the elevation of the Grand-Princes of Moscow.

In those times of ignorance, the Greek religion and its priests could not be otherwise than one of the most powerful means of instruction and of government. An edict of Vladimir, issued about the year 1000, is said to have granted immense privileges to the Russian clergy; modern historians, however, attach no faith to this story. But of what importance to us is the truth of it? it would prove nothing but the blindness of a prince, and would be of no avail to establish a right against nature.

Ought we to look at this question only with a reference to manners, or to obtain an insight into the respective positions of the different orders of the state? But, in either case, the fact is enough without the right. Now, it is certain, that, as far back as the year 1200, the Russian clergy were covered with the spoils of their flocks; that, in numerous cases, they sentenced to death, and without appeal; that the monks, like the nobles elsewhere, had a number of fortified dwellings, of which they were the formidable defenders; that their primate had a court,

boyards, guards, and an Asiatic luxury; that there were public ceremonies at which the proudest sovereigns walked before him, humbly holding the bridle of the ass on which this pontiff rode; and lastly, that, in all state affairs, the primate was the first who was consulted: a very natural circumstance, as many of these heads of the clergy came from Greece, and were looked upon as lights amidst the surrounding darkness.

There is another fact; it is, that, in the civil commotions, the Russian priests were often mediators, ambassadors, even umpires; a part which they were also called upon to perform in virtue of their ministry, consecrated wholly to charity and peace.

The Tartar invasion added to their power: in the desperate resistance of the Russian cities, the Khans witnessed the mighty influence which the clergy possessed over the minds of the people; it was for this reason that Baty, Burgai, and their successors, treated them with respect, and even exonerated them from all tribute. Thenceforth, being the only persons who were allowed to be rich and at peace,* they bought or coveted every thing; Russia was covered with monasteries, in which males and females were blended; and, as all other subjects were horribly oppressed, all flocked to these convents: nobles, merchants, even princes, were anxious to become monks. Such was, besides, the superstition of the age, that the majority of

* See the firman of Usbek, in 1313; he declares, that "the Church is the sole judge of the Church in all cases, and of all who live on its domains. That he renounces the tribute due to him from the lands of the clergy, as well as all his other rights, such as those of customs, plough-money, tolls, farm-tax, and relays for his service. That whoever shall contravene this safeguard shall be punished with death; and not only for the forcible carrying-off of sacred property, but even if they dare merely to condemn, or to blame, the Greek religion."

the Grand-Princes of the first race expired in the monkish habit.

In 1339, an archbishop of Novgorod having been taken prisoner by the Lithuanians, the republic was on the point of ransoming him at the cost of a province, of three cities, and even of its independence.

An earthquake, frightful plagues, particularly that of 1352, and, at a later period, the fear of the end of the world, which an ancient prediction announced for this epoch, consummated the work attributed to Vladimir: the major part of the dying bequeathed their property to monasteries.

The legislation of the Russians was, likewise, such as to give them a tendency to this unworthy conduct: among men who could buy off earthly justice by pecuniary sacrifices, it was no unnatural conclusion that heavenly justice might be bought off by donations. And then, at Byzantium, as at Rome, it had become an established dogma, that a man might gain the riches of heaven by disappointing his heirs, and bequeathing his earthly riches to the men of God; which, assuredly, was closing existence with one of the most selfish acts of his whole life.

As to the toleration displayed by the Khans, we know not whether it ought to be attributed solely to their policy, or rather to their religious apathy, and to their being accustomed to rule people of different religions; one thing is certain, that several Russian bishops resided in the court of these pagan princes; and that, either from doubt, or from the spirit of paganism, the Tartars were believers in the efficacy of all prayers, whatever might be their form, and wished that they should be offered up for them.

In truth, their faith, nomadic like themselves, without any external practices, without any point of union, with scarcely any thing to allure and attach the senses of so

lively a people, could not be an object of much importance. How then could this religion, so vague that it hardly deserves the name of one, have been intolerant? The interest of their priests might have rendered it so; but it does not appear that, among these wandering nations, the priests were ever able to become a corporate body, or to acquire the spirit of one.

At a later period, Mahometanism, which these Tartars embraced, did not, however exclusive it may be, render them less tolerant; and it is remarkable that, far from penetrating into European Russia, that religion stopped short on its frontier. Such of the Asiatic conquerors as entered this part of our globe, to establish themselves there, became converts to Christianity. Would it not seem as if these two religions had finally and invariably divided the different parts of the world, according to its great geographical divisions? But, let us here remark, availing ourselves of the light thrown on the subject by one of our most profound geniuses, that the causes of polygamy, and of the slavery of women and men in the East, are all equally so of the partition which Mahometanism and Christianity have made of Asia and of Europe. Now, almost all these causes are connected with the climate; and the reason is, that a religion having, still more than the laws, its roots in the manners, the climate must have considerable influence over it.

Neither could the doctrine of predestination, which springs from indolence, as well as leads to it, possibly take root in a rigorous, niggardly, variable climate, which stimulates and requires active labour. This was another reason for the distribution of religion according to temperature.

It has been objected, that Christianity itself came from Asia; but this confirms still more forcibly the preceding assertion, since it was compelled to quit that continent.

CHAPTER X.

HOWEVER that may be, Usbek, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, became a Mahometan. He thought that, either from tolerance, apathy, or pride, his predecessors had been negligent in rallying under the same creed the vanquished slaves, who were not to be despised. It is said that he was desirous to divest them of the too obvious marks of dissimilarity and opposition.

This Khan seems to have been deeply impressed with the power of the Russian clergy at this epoch ; of this we may judge by the attentions which he lavished on the primate when he visited his Horde. But the Christian must naturally have been distrustful of a Mahometan prince who reduced all his hordes under the law of the Prophet.

In fact, about 1327, a rumour was all at once spread abroad, that Schevkal,* a kinsman of Usbek, and his ambassador at Twer, had gone thither to massacre the family of the Grand-Prince, to set himself on the throne, and to raise the standard of the Prophet.

The general massacre of the Tartars in that principality, must have convinced Usbek of the emptiness of his projects. Perhaps his wars with Persia induced him to postpone the execution of them till another time ; perhaps, even, they were falsely attributed to him ; as he contented himself with ravaging Russia and changing its Grand-Prince. Of what consequence is it ? To ascertain the truth of the fact is now both impossible and useless ; suffice

* Stchelkhan, according to Levesque.

it, that it proves the active disquietude of Christianity at coming in contact with a hostile religion, equally exclusive with itself.

The dread of Tartar intolerance, therefore, had the effect of rallying the priests round the sole power which was able to protect them. They felt, that the Grand-Prince could defend them against Mahometanism and Catholicism only by means of the united force of the Russians, and that force they exerted themselves to place within his grasp.

This policy dates more particularly from the period when Kief was under the yoke of the Nogays and the Lithuanians.* Kief had preserved its pretensions to the paramount authority; the Primate still resided there; about 1290, it became uninhabitable; the Pontiff then established himself at Vladimir, and subsequently at Moscow. The head of the Church formed a junction with the head of the State, and the religious power with the civil power.

After that period, it was obvious, from the more consistent and undeviating march of the Grand-Princes, that their progress was directed by the constantly adroit and able policy of the priests.

Besides, notwithstanding the general prevalence of superstition, the priests could not escape from the disastrous consequences of civil dissensions; and, as they were as little enabled to turn them to advantage, it became their interest to form an alliance with the power most interested in putting a stop to such excesses.

We see, in fact, that the Metropolitan Photius became the Grand-Prince of Moscow's firmest support, because that throne was his sole protection against the encroachments of the nobles upon the domains of the clergy. The same interest united him with that Grand-Prince against Vitovt,

* From 1299 to 1320.

the Lithuanian, who, by means of a very remarkable council of bishops,* had liberated the church of Kief, which he had conquered, from the supremacy of Moscow, as well as from that of Byzantium.

Listen, also, in 1328, to the prophetic accents of the Metropolitan Peter, choosing Moscow as his residence, and requiring of Ivan Kalita to build a cathedral there. "My bones," said he to him, "shall rest in this city; here will the primates fix their abode; it will overthrow all its enemies. You and your successors will become great and famous."

In 1332, this Pontiff persevered in this close alliance, in spite of the terrible Lithuanian Guedimin, into whose hands he had fallen.

After the death of Ivan II. in 1359, one of the princes who held appanages obtained the Grand-Principality from the Horde; but the Primate, who was obliged to go to crown him at Vladimir, refused to reside with him. The prelate returned to concert, with the Muscovite boyards, the means of restoring the sovereignty to the grandson of Ivan Kalita, to the lineal heir of the Princes of Moscow, who was then only twelve years of age. He went still further; for, proceeding in the work of legitimacy and concentration, he hurled the thunders of the Church against those princes who refused to acknowledge the supremacy of this child.

In 1415, it was also a monk of Moscow, a dependant on the Primate, who predicted the birth of Vassili the Blind, the grandson of the hero of the Don. This monk published throughout the empire, that he had heard a voice from heaven miraculously proclaim, as Grand-Prince of all Russia, the young lineal heir of the throne of Moscow, at the very moment in which he saw the light.

Lastly, in 1447, in a remarkable letter from the Rus-

* See Karamsin, vol. v. p. 274.

sian bishops to the usurper Dmitry,* “observe how they maintain Vassili to be the only sovereign by the grace of God, and how they threaten Dmitry with the wrath of Heaven for his revolts; “but for which,” add they, “Russia would have been emancipated from the Tartar yoke.”

Previously, in 1425, the Primate of that day had proclaimed the accession of this same Vassili, aged only ten years, and summoned his uncles to acknowledge him as their sovereign.

Yet, in 1429, this young prince was near being expelled from the throne by his uncle, Yury of Galitsch. The pernicious and absurd order of succession, from brother to brother, was on the point of being restored, when the same primate stopped Yury by that excommunication, which, as we have before seen, derived additional weight from an opportune pestilence; for, in Russia, it was necessary that the moral force of anathemas should be backed by physical force, without which the excommunication was impotent, as was shown by Pskof, in 1337, and Nijni Novgorod in 1365. Every thing, therefore, prompted the clergy to lean for support on the Grand-Princes, and to enlarge the protecting power of Moscow, with all that they could aggregate to it. Faithful to this policy, the primates had, consequently, a considerable share in the elevation of the Grand-Princes, and the deliverance of their country.

Here terminates the third period of this history: in the fourth, we shall behold Russia emancipating herself from her foreign masters, to become the slave of her own princes.

Four centuries of calamity, arising from the partition of power, had demonstrated the indispensable necessity of concentrating that power; this single idea, which the Grand-Princes of the branch of Moscow faithfully trans-

* See Karamsin, vol. v. p. 403.

mitted to each other, sufficed to raise up the prostrate empire; such mighty efficacy has a firm and consistent will. This idea predominated for two hundred and sixty years; but, spreading in proportion as it encountered fewer obstacles, it went beyond the mark, and produced the most atrocious despotism that imagination can conceive.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

Fourth period, from 1462 to 1613.

THE spirit of the history of the whole of this fourth period,—the period of despotism,—stands fully displayed in its first reign, that of Ivan III. This Prince ascended the throne in 1462, at the age of twenty-two ; he reigned forty-three years. The three succeeding reigns present the continuation, and the horrible abuse, of the system of Ivan III. and the downfall of his race, the effect of that system, which itself was but an expansion of that of his ancestors.

The life of Ivan the Great, like all great lives, had one uniform object—autocracy ; in him, it was one of the powerful and exclusive passions, but without the rashness, the confusion, the violence, which are peculiar to them. From the age of twenty-three, he proved himself capable of regulating its march, and of subjecting it to the slow prudence of a policy at once insidious even to perfidy, and circumspect even to cowardice, but ever invariable.

Ivan III. wished to be independent out of his domains, and autocrat within ; he had, therefore, numerous enemies among his neighbours and his subjects ; but he succeeded

in uniting, by turns, all these enemies against a single one, and thus successively subdued the one by the other.

It was necessary for him to subdue Kasan and the Golden Horde, to which he was yet tributary; the great communities, or Russian republics, of Novgorod, Pskof, and Viatka, which affected a sovereignty almost equal to his own; lastly, the princes, his kinsmen, proud of the appanages which they still retained, and determined to live in them as masters. At the same time he had to repress Lithuania, which was always ready to offer to all these hostile ambitions, republics, and possessors of appanages, the protection of a sovereignty, long the fortunate rival of that of Moscow, which it had straitened on the west, the south, and even the north, by seducing from it successively its great vassals.

Such were his adversaries. For allies, he made use, at home, of his nobles, princes, and subjects of southern and central Russia, inured to slavery, against his northern subjects, who were yet free; afterwards, he employed his nobles and his old and new slaves against the princes of his blood. Lastly, his omnipotence sufficed him against his own boyards, when he had no longer need of them, and whom he ceased to fear, after the humiliation of his other enemies, and the creation of a swarm of petty nobles, his immediate vassals.

As to the Golden Horde and Lithuania, his external adversaries, he sought enemies for them in Persia, in Sweden, in Hungary, at Vienna, and even at Rome; but the celebrated Stephen, Hospodar of Wallachia, and Mengli-Ghirei, Khan of the Crimea, who were placed between and in dread of the Golden Horde, Turkey, and Lithuania, were the foes of his foes. These, then, were his natural allies, whom he distinguished above all others; his machiavelian policy, while it incessantly deceived them, still con-

trived to retain them on the side of Russia, and in perpetual hostility with Lithuania, till he found the favourable moment for striking it in his turn.

Such were the allies and the opponents of Ivan III. At the beginning of his reign he acknowledged all their rights; he cajoled all the hostile powers which he wished to destroy; he flattered all their pretensions, and even patiently submitted to the abuse of them.

From the time of his accession, however, the four-fold contest which he was to sustain against the Lithuanians, the possessors of appanages, the Russian republics, and the Tartars, began with the latter; but, remark with what precautions! If he does not pay *the tribute of the Khan*, if he does not go to pick up his crown at the feet of that sovereign, do not imagine that his young pride haughtily rejects the shameful necessities imposed upon him by a half-vanquished barbarian. No; he merely eludes them, and, while he furtively withholds the tribute, he humbly acknowledges himself a tributary.

Shortly after, the Tartar residents, their retinue, their merchants, who were yet established even in the Kremlin, were at length excluded from it. Who would not suppose that, in a powerful sovereign, this so much desired enfranchisement was the effect of a noble burst of indignation? Not so. On the contrary, it was by insidious pretexts, and by meanly purchasing the protection of a Tartar woman, that the Grand-Prince surreptitiously obtained from the Khan the order that these Mongols should no longer dwell as masters in the very abode of the Russian sovereign.

At a later period, all that the high spirit of his wife, the daughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, could obtain from the autocrat, was, that he would avoid going to meet the Mongol envoy; that he would no longer degrade himself

by spreading under the hoofs of this barbarian's steed a carpet of sable fur; that he would not go to prostrate himself at his feet; that he would refuse to hear on his knees the letter of the Khan; and, lastly, that he would not submit to present to the envoy of his master the cup of koumiss, and shamefully to lick from the neck of the barbarian's horse the drops of the beverage which might have fallen upon it.

And yet, as early as the¹ first years of his reign, ancient Bulgaria, and the first and largest Tartar city, namely, Kasan, had yielded to his arms; nay more, before that triumph and after, the Golden Horde, which had thrice risen in a body against him, had thrice fallen again, and the remnant of it, closely pursued, had at length been destroyed, even in its haunt.

Behold, then, Asia vanquished, and Muscovy liberated! History will, doubtless, henceforth represent the prince under whom this mighty revolution was effected, in no other light than that of a formidable warrior, a glorious conqueror in his triumphal car! But history dare not; not even native history, captive, and submissive, like every thing that springs from the Russian soil; far, indeed, from thus representing this prince, she depicts him displaying, in an age of combats, nothing but a feigned desire to combat. Sometimes, he announced his departure for Kasan with his armies, which he afterwards left to others the task of conducting; sometimes, he at length set off himself, only to stop on the road on the slightest pretext, not blushing to let his warriors march without him, and constantly recommending to them to shun all decisive engagements.

Yet more remains behind; in 1469, after assembling all Russia, and exhausting all the resources of war, when his army was marching to certain triumph, he stopped short!

To so many arms, all fully prepared, the vain hope of some negotiations made him prefer having recourse to policy ; but Russia, indignant, rushed forward in spite of its prince : the general, who, in obedience to his orders, endeavoured to hold it back, was left alone. Ivan learned that the Russian warriors had chosen another leader, and, finally, that, maugre his pusillanimity, they had triumphed over the inhabitants of Kasan. It was not till then, not till the fortunate and unpunished daring of his subjects had thoroughly convinced him of the weakness of Kasan, that he urged against it all the princes engaged in his service, and even his guard ; but he himself continued at Moscow, still seriously alarmed by the last convulsions of the feeble enemy, though, to give the final blow to that enemy, he had dispatched the colossal forces of the whole of Russia !

It was thus that he attacked ; how, then, did he defend himself ? How did it happen that the Golden Horde, which so long bore sway, was thrice repulsed, and at length irretrievably destroyed ? What were the combats of this new Dmitry Donskoi, or, at least, those at which this Louis XIV. was present ? What was the Actium of this Augustus ? How vanquish so often, without a victory ? History does not record even one. On the first invasion of Russia by the Horde, he hardly dared to give orders for his own defence ; Russia was saved by the Tartars of the Crimea alone. With respect to the second (1468), he relied solely upon numbers, and collected forces so disproportionate to the danger, that it was dissipated by the mere rumour of their march. “ In the eyes of the Khan,” says the annalist, “ our army moved and shone like the waves of a majestic sea illumined by the rays of the sun.” It was merely by this display that Ivan contented himself with a second time vanquishing his enemy, whose flight was not even disturbed by the wary autocrat.

On the third invasion by the Golden Horde, in 1480, when he had subdued the most dangerous of the Russian republics ; when he had succeeded in rallying his brothers to the general cause ; when Lithuania, held in check by the Khan of the Crimea, was sufficiently occupied in providing for its own safety ; in short, when all Russia, ardent and in arms, advanced proudly as far as the Oka to meet the Tartars, he alone was discouraged ! he deemed himself conquered ! He alarmed the capital by the flight of the Tzarina, whom he sent to find an asylum in a remote part of the North. He stopped on the approach of the enemy ; he hesitated ; he at length deserted his army, and retired to the distant Moscow, to hide his terrors ; he even recalled his son to that city. At the moment when all might be lost, he seemed resolved to risk nothing that was connected with his person.

But the priests, the people, even that son, were indignant, and broke forth into murmurs : “ Why had he overburthened them with taxes, without paying the Khan his tribute ; and when he had brought the enemy into the heart of the country, why did he refuse to fight for it ? ” He convoked the bishops and boyards, for the purpose, as he said, of asking their advice ; but they replied,* “ Does it become mortals to dread death ! It is in vain to fly from fear : march boldly against the enemy ; such is our advice ! ”

His son, far from obeying him, declared, “ That he would unshrinkingly wait the coming of the Tartars ; that he would rather die at his post than follow the example of his father.”

Thus driven back towards his army by the general clamour, the pusillanimous autocrat returned to his

* By the mouth of Vassian, Archbishop of Rostof. See Karamsin, vol. vi. p. 183.

troops to cool the ardour which glowed in their breasts ; the fear which possessed a single individual, fettered the courage of all. Moscow learned that its sovereign, trembling behind a river,* which divided him from the danger, was chaffering for a remnant of disgrace, that he was negotiating his own dishonour ! Perhaps he was about to degrade himself and Russia so flagrantly as to kiss the stirrup of the Mongol ! Then it was that the Primate addressed him, “ Moved by our tears, you set out once more to combat the enemy of the Christians, and now you implore peace from that infidel who scorns your prayer ! Ah, Prince, to what counsels have you lent your ear ? Is it not, to throw away your shield, and shamefully take flight ? From what a height of grandeur are you not descending ! Would you give up Russia to fire and sword, and the churches to plunder ? and whither would you fly ? Can you soar like the eagle ? Will you fix your nest amidst the stars ? The Lord will cast you down from even that asylum ! No ! you will not desert us ; you will blush at the name of fugitive, and traitor to your country ! ”

But nothing, neither these animating exhortations, nor the fresh reinforcements which thronged from all quarters, nor the insulated situation of his enemy, whom the Lithuanian Prince could not second, nothing, in short, had power to move that most personal of all feelings, autocratical selfishness ! Disarmed of his machiavelian policy, in which his genius entirely consisted ; in the midst of two hundred thousand warriors, Ivan believed himself powerless ; without fighting, he imagined himself without any resource ; and when the ice of a premature winter had obliterated the river which served as a barrier between the two armies, he was seized with consternation, determined to fall back, and could not even fly but with a disorderly flight !

* The Luga.

At length, no doubt, we shall behold a tyrant stripped of all his delusive qualities, and reduced to his intrinsic value, and shall see this shameful nudity consign him to the contempt of his people, whom he deserted. Not so. However low he might have fallen, the immense interval which separated him from the people, and even from his nobles, was not yet traversed: the demigod had not yet touched the earth: in him was still respected his whole ancestral line, and such vast innate authority! What Muscovite could dare to conceive the possibility of dispensing with the son of Rurik, this descendant of St. Vladimir! Dastardly as was the soul of this prince, it seemed to be the only one by which Russia could be animated: it might be supposed to be the exclusive condition of the national existence, and that this immense body could not resign it without suicide.

Such a degree of servility seems wonderful; and yet we shall see it increased! This strong, this rooted faith, was rewarded by a miracle! At the very moment when Russia, in dismay, believed that she had again fallen, and for ever, into the chains of the Tartars, she learned, all at once, that a similar terror had scattered the army of her ferocious dominators; that, during the premeditated inaction of Ivan, his lieutenant of Svenigorod, and his allies, were on the march; that one of those allies, the Khan of the Crimea, united to that vaivode, had, by attacking the Golden Horde in its capital, compelled the menacing army to bend its course homeward; while the others, a hetman of the Cossacks, and the murza of the Nogays, stationed on the route taken by the Mongols, had surprised them during their disorderly retrograde march, and had totally destroyed them.

The mystery was now dispelled! Ivan had prepared every thing, had foreseen every thing. Regarded by his

people, as a second Providence, his pusillanimity was now looked upon as wisdom; his cowardice as prudence; his flight as skill. He wished to make his enemies their own destroyers: without risking, like Dmitry Donskoi, the fate of Russia on a battle, he had by a diversion, in spite of herself and for ever, delivered her from the Asiatic yoke; the hour, the place, all had been prescribed. Placed, like the Divinity, out of the sphere of those whom he protected, he had contemned even their contempt, and, unmoved by the clamour of his subjects, had waited the appointed hour!

Thus it was, that time, fortune, and Menghli-Ghirei, ensured the triumph of Ivan over his first adversaries; but his good fortune did not intoxicate him. Having attained his purpose, he despised not the means by which he had attained it. Though, with the authority of a master, he gave sovereigns to Kasan, he chose them from the family of the Khan of the Crimea, his faithful ally. His court and his states were peopled with refugee or converted Tartar princes. His attitude, however, was materially changed. The Turks of Caffa had plundered some Russian merchants. In the pusillanimous Grand-Prince of 1480, who could recognise the Tzar of 1492, writing in the following terms to Sultan Bajazet? "Whence arise these acts of violence? Are you aware of them, or are you not? One word more: Mahomet, your father, was a great prince; he designed to send ambassadors to compliment me; God opposed the execution of this project. Why should we not now see the accomplishment of it?" This same Ivan, who was lately so terrified in the presence of the Tartar, expressly recommended to his ambassador at Constantinople, in 1498, "to be careful not to do any thing to compromise the dignity of his master; to compliment the Sultan standing, and not on his knees; to address his speech only to that sovereign himself, and to yield precedence to no other ambassador."

CHAPTER II.

IT is true, that, at the period in question, Ivan had triumphantly terminated another contest. Novgorod the Great, Pskof, and Viatka, had been subjugated. During the first seven years of his reign, and of his war against Kasan, pestilence and famine, the fit allies of tyranny, had enfeebled those Russian republics, and the dread of the end of the world, which was predicted to happen at that time,* had, by turning from earth the passions of Ivan's subjects, afforded a more free and secure scope to his own.

The insolent Viatka had, however, declared itself neutral between Kasan and Moscow, and the Prince had dissembled his anger, for Novgorod had also shown itself rebellious: the fall of Kasan had alarmed that great republic, and already it had exclaimed to the Pskovians, "Take arms! march with us, to destroy the despotic power of Moscow!" It was necessary, therefore, to neglect Viatka, to gain Pskof and its twelve cities, and to combine all against Novgorod. That having once fallen, all the rest would follow.

Novgorod, rather an ally than a subject of Moscow, reigned over all the north of Russia, whose exclusive commerce it possessed, and which it had to protect against the Swedes, the Livonian knights, and Lithuania. But, since the time of Ivan Kalita, immersed in luxury, it had oftener ransomed than defended its frontiers and its liberties! Of the latter, some had already slipped from

* In 1465, according to the Greek chronicle, the seventh thousand years was completed, and that was believed to be the epoch of the end of the world.

its grasp; but, in 1471, emboldened by the presumed pusillanimity of the Grand-Prince, it determined to resume them. It was stimulated to this step by Marpha, the rich and powerful widow of a Posadnick, who is said to have been enamoured of a Lithuanian. The idea pleased her of bestowing her country on that of her lover. She was an ambitious woman; and in the ambition of females, the passions are almost always exerted to the advantage of a man: as if women, the radii of another centre, the complement of another sex, ought to exist only in that sex, and all that is merely personal to them were interdicted to their nature.

She opened her palace, and lavished her treasures on the citizens of Novgorod, whom the darling sounds of their *vetchvoi-kolokol*,* perpetually summoned to the marketplace, which was the scene of their licentiousness. They drove out the officers of the Grand-Prince; they seized on his domains; and, when the surrender of Kasan allowed Ivan to return towards Novgorod, and to make his threatening voice heard there, they broke out into revolt, and gave themselves, by a treaty, to Casimir Prince of Lithuania.

Here, amidst his other affairs with the Tartars, Sweden, Livonia, Pskov, and the Princes, his kinsfolk, it is curious to observe the politic system pursued by Ivan against this formidable republic. Let us especially notice that equally firm and flexible determination; enthusiastic in its purpose, yet at the same time cool and persevering in its means; sometimes resorting to humility and machiavelism, sometimes to pride and terror, but also to patience, kindness, and generosity; which consideration, coupled with the faults of his antagonists, and the imperious circumstances of the period, gives to the establishment of Ivan the Third's tyranny, a seemingness, a species of moderation, and even of public utility.

* The assembling bell.

Making allies of all that came in his way, he succeeded in arming against the ultra-democracy of Novgorod, the pride of the nobles ; against its excessive opulence, the greediness of the Princes who were still possessed of appanages ; against its treason and apostasy, the fanaticism of the people ; and Novgorod, attacked at once by three armies, which were followed by swarms of plunderers, resisted obstinately within, faint-heartedly without, and was finally overpowered.

Ivan affected a moderation, which he considered to be still indispensable. Being not yet sufficiently secured against his ambitious relatives, to allow of his seizing on so rich a prey without giving them a share of it, he seemed to content himself with a ransom, and the restitution of some domains : but he ruined Novgorod by devastation and plunder ; and, in the act of submission of that republic, the obscurity of some ambiguous words reserved to him the authority of legislator and of supreme judge. This was the side by which he seized the prey, and by which he gradually drew it towards him, that he might at length wholly devour it.

At the outset, he availed himself of the stupefaction produced by this first blow, and of an insult offered by the Permians, to deprive the great city of those tributaries. Thenceforth, Moscow was enriched by the commerce of that people with Germany, which had been formerly so much coveted by Ivan Kalita. Then, on receiving intelligence of an aggression of the Livonian knights, he, under pretence of affording succour to the great city, and to Pskof, dispatched thither his ambassadors and troops, to fight and negotiate in his name ; to render him present every where ; and thus to take from those republics, which were also drained by his army, the right of making peace and war.

At the same time, he fomented the dissensions between

the principal citizens of Novgorod and the lower class ; and, when he had succeeded in having all complaints addressed to himself, he went among them, to impoverish the rich by the presents and magnificent receptions which his presence required, and to dazzle the people by the new splendour of his oriental court, and to seduce them by the partiality of his justice.

It was then that he sent to Moscow, loaded with chains, the nobles of Novgorod, who had formerly been his enemies. He had procured the denunciation of these boyards by the people : the blind jealousy of the plebeians exulted to see violated, in the persons of these eminent characters, the ancient law of the republic, “ that none of its citizens should ever be tried or punished out of the limits of its own territory.” Thus it was that, craftily mingling stratagem with force, and justice with violence, Ivan disunited all his adversaries, made himself judge in all causes, and gained the hearts of all the multitude, the transports of which followed him even to Moscow.

These republicans seemed henceforward desirous of appealing to no other dispenser of justice than the Grand-Prince ; their complaints were carried to the foot of his throne ; and he the better able to avail himself of the opportunity, because it was of his own making, immediately summoned all these imprudent men to appear before his tribunal. Novgorod, which had hitherto been under no jurisdiction but its own, now, astonished, and hurried out of itself to Moscow, no longer knew whether it obeyed the prince or itself. “ Never,” say the annalists, “ never, since Rurik, had such an event happened ; never had the Grand-Princes of Kief and Vladimir seen the Novgorodians come and submit to them as their judges. Ivan alone could reduce Novgorod to that degree of humiliation.”

But the autocrat had succeeded in clothing all these

usurpations in seductive garbs. In all his encroachments, he seemed to be entirely above personal hatred. Marpha herself was not molested ; his grudge was not against persons, for their existence is transitory, and their cries might excite emotion, or betray his course ; it was against things, for they are more durable, are silent ; and, besides, include or hurry persons away with them. Making good subservient to evil, he employed seven years in weaning these republicans from their customs, by the generous moderation and equity of his sentences ; and when, by this slow, gradual, and almost imperceptible progression, he thought that he had led these blinded men far enough astray from their ancient usages, and had made them lose sight of their ancient liberties, then, on every thoughtless movement to which he had given rise, and on every imprudence that he had excited, he grounded a claim of right.

At length, the name of sovereign, which, during an audience, was given to him by the inadvertence or treason of an envoy of the republic, sufficed to make him instantly claim all the rights of an absolute master, which custom then attached to that title. He required, therefore, that the republic should take an oath to him as its legislator and its judge ; that it should receive his boyards, with all their arbitrary vexations, their encroachments, and their ruinous oppressions ; that it should yield to them the revered palace of Yaroslaf, the sacred temple of Novgorodian liberty ; their forum, where, for more than five centuries, their public assemblies had been held ; and, lastly, that each citizen should abdicate his share of the sovereignty, for the benefit of a single individual.

This sudden explosion of tyranny was responded to by a counter explosion of indignation and independence. The veil dropped from the eyes of Novgorod ; the cherished voice of its liberty, its *vetchvoi kolokol*, uttered a last peal

of alarm; it summoned the citizens to that forum from which there was now an intention of expelling them for ever. Novgorod arose, with one accord, and exclaimed, "Ivan is, in fact, our lord, but he shall never be our sovereign; the tribunal of his deputies may sit at Goroditsch, but never at Novgorod; Novgorod is, and always shall be, its own judge." Then, in their transports of rage, these unfortunate men completed the alienation of the nobles, by the massacre of several of them, whom they believed to be accomplices of tyranny. Their imprudent envoy, whom they so loudly disavowed, was compelled to appear before them; they tried, clamorously condemned, and tore him into a thousand pieces, and a second time gave themselves up to Lithuania, whose prince they invoked to their aid.

When the perfectly foreseen intelligence of this righteous insurrection reached the ears of the crafty despot, he feigned a painful surprise; he uttered groans: if he were to be believed, it was he, this impostor, who had been treacherously deceived. He accused the invaded of having spread a snare for the invader; "it was they who sought him for their sovereign; and when, yielding to their wishes, he had assumed that title, they disavowed him; they had the impudence to give him the lie formally in the face of all Russia; they had dared to shed the blood of their compatriots who remained faithful, and to betray Heaven and the holy land of the Russians, by calling into its limits a foreign religion and domination."

The machiavelian tyrant addressed these hypocritical complaints to his priests, to his nobles, to his people; to all the powers of heaven and earth, which he was arraying against these hapless republicans. Pskof and Twer alone appear to have hesitated; but, under the form of a contingent, he swept or drew away the whole of their

military resources; for he never undertook more than one thing at a time, and, with friends as with foes, he had the art of combining the efforts of all against a single opponent.

Surrounded by so many enemies, Novgorod was terrified: it endeavoured to obtain conditions. "I will reign at Novgorod as I do at Moscow," at length exclaimed the despot: "I must have domains on your territory; you must give up your Posadnick, and the bell which summons you to the national council!" Yet, always fraudulent, he, in the same breath, promised to respect a liberty which he deprived of every means of defence.

On hearing this terrible declaration, these unfortunate citizens were thrown into the most violent agitation in their city, which was now become their prison. Several times did they furiously seize their arms, and as often did they sink again into the despondence of impotency.

Meanwhile, they were closely watched by the crafty autocrat. For a whole month, though the sword was in his hand, he remained immovable; for he did not amuse himself with glory. His patient strength knew how to wait; he had collected such abundance of warlike means only to avoid war; and all this innumerable army of combatants only to prevent a combat. It was by consternation that he was desirous to vanquish; and, contracting by degrees the circle of fire and sword, which he had drawn round the republic, he overbore, he oppressed, he terrified it, by his formidable presence. His all-powerful arm, though so long raised, did not suffer fatigue; its weight sunk but gradually on these unhappy beings; and, by the infallible effect of this slow and inevitable compression, without striking a blow, it at length compelled their despair to give place to resignation.

This system of circumspection thus displayed in the contest, was equally pursued after the victory; the melancholy

recollection of which was not stained with blood. Marpha and seven of the principal Novgorodians were the only persons who were sent prisoners to Moscow, and had their property confiscated; but, on the fifteenth of January, 1478, the national assemblies ceased, and the citizens took the oath of slavery. On the eighteenth, the boyards, the followers of the boyards, the notables, or, in a word, the nobility, entered voluntarily into the service of the victor; and the possessions of the clergy, united to the domain of the Prince, served to endow the three hundred thousand followers of boyards, the immediate vassals of his own creation, by whom the autocracy of Moscow over all the rest was to be permanently secured.

In the following years the plan was followed up; the fate of the Russian republics was sealed (1489). Viatka, a Novgorodian colony, which was animated by the same spirit, was subjugated with the same precautions. The Grand-Prince had appeared inattentive to its rebellions—insensible to its insults, as long as Kasan and Novgorod resisted; but when those states were reduced to submission, he burst forth, and it was by another display of irresistible force that, without a combat, he annihilated this republic also. The blood of three guilty persons was sufficient to satisfy his long-concentrated irritation; but he left there nothing but slaves.

The colony being destroyed, he returned to repeat his blows on the parent city. From 1479 to 1528, at each convulsion of the protracted agony of the great, but now expiring, Novgorod, the yoke increased in weight; till, exhausted of its republican population, which was wholly transplanted to the slavish soil of Moscow, it was re-peopled by Muscovites.

In fact, it has never been seen, that any great modern empire has been able to acquire that unity which is as in-

dispensable for its own defence, as for the internally pacifying, regulating, enriching, instructing, and civilizing it;—in a word, for rendering it worthy and capable of liberty,—without being purified from its barbarous institutions, by passing, as in a vast conflagration, through the medium of absolute power.

Here, as elsewhere, in order to become independent abroad, and enlightened at home, it was necessary that all tyrannies should be absorbed and centered in one.

The restless and capricious ultra-democracy of Novgorod, formed a state within a state; its existence was no less incompatible than that of the appanages with the existence of the Grand-Prince. Political necessity, therefore, impelled Ivan to this great encroachment. As to the pretext, whether Marpha was excited by ambition, patriotism, or love, to seek, in a foreign prince, a protection less dangerous than the sovereign of Moscow, her motive is of little consequence; the machiavelism of Ivan, in first fraudulently pilfering, and then violently seizing upon, all the liberties of the republic, did but too well justify the efforts of that celebrated woman.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the most fatal blow which Ivan gave to Novgorod, was an involuntary one. Till 1492, that commercial mart had been singularly populous, rich, and powerful; and it is truly worthy of attention that, notwithstanding its barbarism, and so many foreign wars and internal dissensions, the fruits of its popular government, still the commercial prosperity of that capricious city continued to increase: so much, even in its most disorderly form, is liberty favourable to commerce. It would seem as if, amidst all their excesses, a free people preserve, in this respect, the instinct of their true interest; while absolute power, in such cases, is perpetually falling into errors.

As long as Novgorod was free, the Hanseatic cities, notwithstanding her frequent intestine commotions, continued to traffic there with a confidence which was never misplaced; but, in the early days of her servitude, a burst of despotic anger destroyed the source of her prosperity. Ivan the Third, so skilful in extending and securing his power, committed a fault which, during seven centuries, the popular assemblies of the mad and inconstant republic had never committed. Having been insulted by a Hanseatic city, he ordered to be put in chains, at Novgorod, all the merchants of all the cities of that union, and confiscated the whole of their property. From that moment confidence was no more, the commerce of the North took another route, and the great Novgorod, which, for many centuries, was able to muster a force of forty thousand men, and which is said to have been peopled by four hundred thousand souls,* is now nothing more than an insignificant borough.†

CHAPTER III.

ON this vast field, meanwhile, from which every other species of ambition had been swept away, the Grand-Prince, and the princes, possessed of appanages, feudality and autocracy, were alone left standing, and now confronted each other; there was no longer any intermediary between them, nothing to divert their attention to another quarter: accordingly, they were not slow to come into hostile collision.

But in this third grand contest, there was nothing that

* See Coxe.

† See Levesque

was unforeseen ; the autocrat had long been prepared for it ; it began in his heart at the moment of his accession. The enfranchisement from the Tartar yoke was, however, more pressing ; that prelude was necessary, and the enslaving of the Russian Republics was more easy.

Accordingly, in this third contest, he had hitherto proceeded with a still more circumspect tardiness ; for here the question related to individuals of a nature similar to his own, and always less easily circumvented than large bodies.

It was for this reason that, during twenty-three years, his machiavelian patience recognized the rights of all those princes, and even their independence ; all that he could venture to do, in spite of their complaints, was to keep his conquests, without giving them any share, and to retain the inheritance of two of his brothers, who left no heirs.

When, however, in 1480, his two other brothers revolted, and withdrew into Lithuania, plundering every thing in their way ; as he had not yet finished with the horde and the Republics, he humiliated himself, he bent down to the earth, and brought the fugitives back by the most humble supplications, and the most important concessions.

But at length, in 1485, Novgorod was crushed, the Golden horde was destroyed, the Livonian knights were vanquished, and the impotence of Lithuania was obvious. The time was, therefore, come ; and as every thing was prepared for it, the attack was immediately commenced on the Prince of Twer.

As a consequence of the invariable policy of the Grand-Princes, Ivan III., guided by Vassili his father, had formally espoused, at the age of twelve years, the Princess of Twer ; at eighteen, he had a son by this marriage, who was afterwards married to the daughter of Stephen, hos-

podar of Moldavia, and by that son he had a grandson. But, in 1485, having lost his first consort, he was wedded again, to a Greek Princess. His son died ; the ties that connected Ivan with Twer were thus broken, and since then, for a long period, he had held that first and last rival of Moscow, in a manner surrounded and besieged by his conquests.

In this instance, his aggressive system was exactly the same that he had acted upon against Novgorod. He began by terrifying the Prince of Twer with his ambition ; and, when he had led him to call Lithuania to his assistance, he raised the cry of treason ; he armed, he dismayed his victim by the formidable aspect of all his irritated power. His feigned moderation was to be propitiated only by concessions, which deprived his feeble adversary of every means of resisting him in future. Then, avoiding the ostentatious show of dangerous power, which he had learned to render useless, it was by an underhand war, by concealed violences, that he achieved this conquest ; he stirred up a host of disputes between the Muscovites and the Twerians, and manifested such partiality against the latter, that, discouraged, they abandoned so wearisome a cause. All came to range themselves under the protection of Moscow ; while their Prince, driven to despair, had no asylum left but Lithuania, where he died without posterity.

Twer being united with Moscow, all speedily thronged to that centre of attraction. The period of circumspect management was gone by ; Ivan strode rapidly onward to his object : he spoke, and the sovereigns of Rostof and Yaroslaf dared not be any thing more than governors of those principalities. A burst of his anger sufficed to inspire with such terror the Prince of Vereia, that he fled into Lithuania, and the autocrat punished his fear and his flight

by compelling the dying father of the fugitive to disinherit him of several cities, which Ivan appropriated to himself.

Two brothers of the despot, however, still lived ; but one of them, struck with dismay, submitted, and very soon his appanage was reunited, by will, to the Grand Principality ; the other, though of a more stirring nature, was unsuspecting : at the court of the Grand-Prince, he was indulging in effusions of the heart which he imagined to be reciprocal, when, all at once, he was arrested, and was loaded with chains, under the burthen of which he expired, with no other revenge than the remorse of his murderer ; a tardy remorse, which a synod of bishops stifled by an iniquitous and cowardly absolution.

Now, at length, the feudal hydra was vanquished ; all the Princes of the same blood as Ivan, whom, on his accession to the throne, he had found almost as much sovereigns as himself, were either expatriated, or dead, or so completely subdued, that they aspired to no other honour than that of being the most officious of his servants. They were beaten down by so strong a hand, that, thenceforth, confounded with the higher class of nobility, not one of them dared so much as call to mind their common origin with their haughty ruler.

CHAPTER IV.

THUS far, Tartars, Russian Republics, Princes holding appanages, every thing, abroad as well as at home, had given way ; but this triple advantage was gained by Ivan in spite of the efforts of Casimir of Poland, the constant ally of all his enemies.

For thirty years, this fourth contest was only a war of diplomacy and kidnapping, in which each monarch, enticing to himself the malecontent subjects of his adversary, and becoming the underhand protector of their revolts, attacked his enemy only indirectly, and, as we may say, by dint of allies.

For Casimir, his allies were sometimes the Livonian knights, sometimes the Golden horde, and perpetually the Russian petty princes and republics, whom he excited against the Muscovite sovereign, and whose existence he compromised and destroyed, by abandoning them to their own strength in the moment of danger. On the part of the far more able Russian Prince, they were the celebrated Stephen, first hospodar of Moldavia, whom he attached to himself by marriage, Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary, Maximilian of Austria, and, especially, Menghi Ghirei, the khan of the Crimea, of whom, notwithstanding his own many proofs of bad faith, he succeeded in making so faithful an ally.

In this war of two Princes embarrassed by enemies which they mutually stirred up against each other, and by untractable subjects, all the advantage was on the side of Ivan. As early as about 1492, the Petty Principalities which Vitovt had detached from Russia, had already been

successively reunited to it. The first enticed or compelled the others, without the circumspect Ivan seeming to have any concern in this feudal movement.

But, about this epoch, Casimir died ; he was succeeded by the weak Alexander, but only in Lithuania ; that duchy separated itself from Poland ; and power was there more widely diffused, while at Moscow it was becoming centralized : the machiavelian autocrat then declared himself. Here, as in his three previous contests, we see the moment, so long prepared beforehand, in which success had become almost infallible, and in which every thing superabounded for the explosion ; he, therefore, marched unconcealed, and with open force, but in such a vast proportion, that he had less to combat than to overwhelm.

And, notwithstanding this, he did not yet finish : here, as in other instances, and though completely armed, he paused before the semblance of a battle. If he profited by the immensity of his armaments, the powerful diversions of the khan of the Crimea, the simultaneous aggression of the hospodar of Moldavia, and the weakness of Alexander, who was deserted by his brothers, it was without daring to strike a decisive blow : he preferred to expect every thing from his enemy, to ally himself with all his faults, and to lead him, like Novgorod, and like Twer, by successive concessions, to be the instrument of his own destruction.

With this view, and to secure himself in the principalities which he had surreptitiously reconquered, he accepted as his son-in-law the Lithuanian prince, that very Alexander who had recently attempted to poison him ; but he did not the less continue the ally of that prince's enemies, whom he excited to aggressions upon Lithuania, while, at the same time, he prohibited Alexander from resisting them otherwise than by complaints.

The princess, his daughter, whom he seemed to have

given to him as a pledge of peace, was only an additional enemy, whom he had artfully introduced into the heart of his adversary's states. She carried thither the Greek religion, which was that of all the Russians who were still subject to Lithuania, of whom she seemed the protectress, and who were persecuted by her husband, as zealous a Catholic as he was a contemptible politician.

Ivan added fuel to this smouldering fire; then, when the conflagration of a religious war at length burst forth, claiming Heaven as his ally, and gathering courage from the cries of his fellow-religionists, who implored his aid, he at last, about 1500, ventured, by a victory, to resume, as far as the walls of Kief and Smolensk, a part of the conquests which were made from his ancestors by Guedimin and Vitovt.

CHAPTER V.

THUS was all accomplished at once, almost without combats, and by the same patient, persevering machiavelism, advancing slowly and gradually, and not putting out its strength till it had rendered the enemy so weak, and its own power so strong, that the mere display of the latter was sufficient to annihilate all opposition.

We behold a triple revolution of men, of things, and of manners, at length consummated. But, for a long period, Ivan, the sole centre of this sphere, had been looked upon by the Russians as the source of all things. But, having so many internal enemies, whence did he derive this autocratical ascendancy? By what illusions did he fascinate such numerous hostile gazers? How happened it, that all

power capable of resisting his orders was henceforth to appear disorder? Exposed singly to so many domestic foes, whom he curbed, how did he at length overlook them from such an elevation that, even according to their own avowal, he seemed to be *their terrestrial deity*?

What age has, more than our own, felt all the ascendancy of victory? But, in the instance of the Russian sovereign, where are those splendid and daring acts which have a dazzling effect? How was the pusillanimous Ivan enabled to assume that conquering attitude, that over-awing and irresistible majesty, which is the attribute of heroism? A last glance thrown on some particular details of this great life will explain to us the phenomenon. Let us follow the progress of this predominating ruler. From the first years of his reign, what a long series of efforts concurred to the accomplishment of his purpose! Stratagems, intrigues, fallacious promises, even an oath to apostatise, from which he was released by the heads of his religion; nothing was thought too much that could forward his designs. He was desirous to obtain the Pope's assent, that Sophia, the last princess of the Greek imperial family, who, being dispossessed of Byzantium by the Turks, had taken refuge at Rome, should come to adorn his throne, to consolidate it with all her rights, and to environ it with all her fascinations.

Constantinople is, in the eyes of the Russians, the sacred source of the faith which they profess; its emperors long gave to them their primates; it is from thence that they derive their written characters,* their vapour baths, a

* Their mode of writing dates from the year 865: it came from Moravia. The Russian alphabet was then invented there, by a philosopher named Constantine. This learned man had been sent from Byzantium to translate the Scriptures into the language of the country. In the time of Vladimir, about 981, there were to be seen at Kief, inscriptions engraven in this character.

part of their manners and usages, the saints to whose images they pay an idolatrous worship, and, lastly, the supreme religion. They had been brought to them, in a former age, by a Greek princess; it was she who had made their Vladimir, that mighty one below, a mighty one above; who had made that master of their destiny on earth, their holy protector in heaven. Now, that Byzantium was become captive to the Turks, the dexterous Ivan wished that a second Greek princess should come to render Moscow the heir of that Byzantium; that she should bring, as her dowry to its Grand-Prince, the two-headed eagle, that symbol of autocracy, and the title of Tzar, which, as the Russians tell us, is identical with that of *supreme authority*.* He wished that she should introduce into his palace the haughty hierarchy of the sumptuous court of Constantine, and its pompous ceremonies, less frivolous than some persons imagine; in a word, that despotism of divine right, by which devotedness to the prince would be strengthened and even sanctified in Russia. This theocratic power, together with the iron yoke which Ivan inherited from the Tartars, and the entirely military constitution which was soon to be added by a great man, were destined to complete the most extraordinary concurrence of circumstances that ever formed princes to despotism, and nations to slavery.

Nor was this all: by his union with that imperial scion, the skilful and powerful hand of Ivan seems to have turned back the face of his empire from east to west. He brought the weight of the Russian throne into the balance of Europe. Russia, which, during nearly three centuries, had been detached from civilization, was again to be linked with it by the ties of policy, and by those of arts and sciences.

* See Karamsin.

It was the Greeks, expelled from Constantinople, and sheltered in Italy, who conveyed those arts to Moscow, in the train of their sovereign. In fact, by a singular conformity of circumstances, those Greeks, vanquished in their turn near the ancient and Homeric conquests of their ancestors, had come like Æneas and his Trojans of old, to dignify Italy also, by taking refuge there with their household gods.

This was the reason why the crafty Ivan seemed willing to sacrifice even his religion to obtain this high alliance from the Pope, who was then the protector of the Greek princess. See how triumphantly he caused to be conducted through his states this sovereign, who came to autocratise, and even to deify his power! Hear the language of his nobles and his priests: "God," said they, "sends him this illustrious spouse, an offset of that imperial tree, the shadow of which was formerly spread over all orthodox Christian brothers. Fortunate alliance! which brings to mind that of the Great Vladimir, and which will make another Byzantium of Moscow, and give to its Grand-Princes all the rights of the Greek emperors!"

Thenceforth, a sumptuous train was requisite to the new autocrat. The novel pageantries of Constantinople came to fascinate the eyes of these barbarians. At the same time, his people saw him raise the massy walls of the Kremlin, the awe-inspiring abode, the formidable fortress of autocracy; and also of that first church of stone, included within its circuit, which the Moscovite architects had thrice endeavoured to construct, and which had thrice fallen on these unskilful artificers.

For nothing was neglected by Ivan; founders, engineers, architects, miners, and minters, were invited from Germany, and from Italy, and, following the footsteps of a civilized princess, they ventured to penetrate into these almost un-

known countries. The mines of Petchora were discovered ; and Russia, for the first time, saw silver and copper money coined in its capital.

We may imagine what a strikingly impressive effect must, at that period, have been produced by a throne, which was raised to such a prodigious height, that religion itself, every where else so dominant, served as one of its supporters, and of which the summit, just beginning to emerge from the obscure night in which all these tribes were still stagnating, like a luminous point in the darkness, shone to their wondering eyes with all the splendour of the most gorgeous civil and religious ceremonies, and with the first rays of European civilization.

Observe with what care this Louis XIV. of barbarism turned these advantages to account. Proclaiming his divine right, it is in the midst of this pomp that we hear him exclaim, " The high and holy Trinity, from which we have received the government of all Russia ;" to which, according to his prompting, the interpreter of that Trinity responds, " The empire which you hold from God himself."

When, subsequently, the republicans of Pskof dared to communicate with him otherwise than by a respectful embassy, he instantly astounded them by his indignation ; nor did he allow himself to be appeased, till after he had long bent them under the weight of his wrath, that he might be certain that they would never again lose the servile feeling thus deeply and protractedly impressed.

It was thus, that, in the eyes of his subjects, he would not grant his protection to the Livonian knights, till, instead of requesting, they had supplicated for it. In his diplomatic instructions, we recognise the proud susceptibility of a prince who wished to ally himself with the enlightened courts of Europe, but with all the precautions of the most irritable haughtiness ; he seemed to fear that European

civilization might treat him as an upstart, an Oriental barbarian, the tributary of a horde.

It was for this reason that he, whom we have seen so carefully studying the policy of Europe, and deeming it of such high importance to bring his throne in contact with other thrones, that he, for a mere omission of formalities, refused to receive, and even drove from his presence the Austrian envoy; he forced the Emperor to treat with him as his equal; and if his subjects may be believed, he even denied his daughter to the King of the Romans, Vienna not having consented to all the concessions which he required.

As to the Margrave of Baden, the union of his daughter with that German prince appeared to him a derogatory alliance. When Maximilian endeavoured to seduce his ambition with the title of king, Ivan haughtily declared to him, "That he would not degrade himself by receiving titles from any prince on earth, and that he held his crown from God alone!"

It was then that the Russian boyards lost their ancient right, of quitting his service to enter that of the other princes who still possessed appanages. And what boyard, what Russian prince of the blood, could thenceforth have such an opinion of his own greatness, as not to humble himself before the dazzling splendour of this sovereign majesty? Already blended together, and oblivious of personal dignity, all crowded around him, and, like the nobles of Byzantium, esteemed it an honour to be admitted into his domestic establishment. Accordingly, they soon were absorbed in it entirely, and had no other existence than in the servile offices of which he multiplied the number.

From this epoch it was that they began to consider as hereditary those civil, military, and domestic ranks, and to contend with each other for precedence; but did they dare to avail themselves of it in contravention of his orders,

then, depriving their vanity of this last resource, he declared to them, "that they ought to submit without a murmur to the will of their sovereign, and that when the question related to his service every office was good."

After the death of his eldest son, however, the issue of his first marriage, these nobles are said to have pushed their intrigues even to the foot of Ivan's throne, to secure the inheritance of it to the son of the regretted prince; it is said, too, that these worthy ancestors of the boyards of Peter the Great slandered their Greek Czarina, the mother of a second son, out of hatred to the commencement of civilization which she protected, and the foreigners whom she had introduced.

One fact is certain, that Ivan, being misled, at first disgraced that princess, but that, afterwards, on better information, he restored her to his favour. It is even believed that it was with a view to preserve his innovations, that he made her son his heir, to the exclusion of his grandson, whom he consigned to perpetual imprisonment. Ivan would not leave behind him this ferment of discord; in this circumstance, as at a later period, and more cruelly, was done by the regenerator of Russia, he sacrificed every thing to reasons of state, of a state of which he had made himself the soul, and which ought to be animated by only one.

It was then that Pskof ventured to expostulate, in behalf of the elder branch, against the heir whom he had chosen. But, "Am I not, then, at liberty to act as I please?" replied he haughtily: "I will give Russia to whom I think proper, and I command you to obey."

As to the boyards who had taken part in these intrigues, their rank, hitherto respected, did not shield them: whether accusers or accused, they were successively victims of the credulity, or of the vengeance, of the prince.

Russia, dumb with astonishment, witnessed, for the first time, the fall of several of those illustrious heads ; a word from Ivan sufficed to strike them off as easily as though they had belonged to the meanest of his subjects.

Is it therefore astonishing, that all should have bent down before this autocrat, whose able hand, rending the veil which concealed Russia from Europe, had forced it to pay homage to his power ; whose policy possessed the art of obtaining the services of all, without ever serving any ; and who had added to Russia nineteen thousand square miles and four millions of subjects, by extending it from Kief to Kasan, and as far as Siberia and Norwegian Lapland ? Personally, it is true that he conquered nothing ; but, on the other hand, free from the infatuation of warrior-kings, he knew how to pause opportunely, to acquire as much, to retain more, and to close his career under happier auspices.

He was the first to borrow the arts of civilization ; but for himself only, as the means of riches and power, and much less to enlighten than to dazzle his subjects.

The second legislator of the Russians, to him they are indebted for a reform in the manners of their clergy, over whom he presided in their councils ; a first attempt at a general seizure of the property of that order ; and, in spite of the furious cries of that order, the suppression, by means of ridicule and exile alone, of a heresy which the saints of the day wished to exterminate by fire.

This Jewish heresy consisted in expecting the advent of the Messiah ; in denying and cursing Christ and the Holy Virgin ; in spitting on the images of the saints, and tearing them with the teeth ; in disbelieving Paradise and the resurrection of the dead ; and, lastly, in putting faith in a cabalistical book, given to Adam by God himself. From that book Solomon was imagined to have derived his wis-

dom; and Moses, Joseph, Elias, and Daniel, their power over the elements and monsters, their skill in the interpretation of dreams, and their faculty of looking into futurity. Zosimus, a primate, is said to have been the head of these heretics. "We see," exclaimed at that period St. Joseph of Volok, "we see a son of Satan seated on the throne of the holy prelates; we see a devouring wolf under the garb of a simple shepherd! They are no more; they have flown to the bosom of Christ; those daring eagles of religion, those godly bishops who would have pitilessly torn out with their talons every eye that was bold enough to cast a squinting glance on the divinity of the Saviour! Now, in the garden of the Church, we hear nothing but the hiss of a horrible reptile, which vomits forth blasphemy against the Lord, and against his blessed mother."

But Ivan did not allow himself to be led away by these insane declamations; he contented himself with causing the heresy to be anathematized, banishing the heretics, and nominating another primate. He himself, by virtue of his supremacy over the Church, and his divine right to the throne, undertook the inauguration of the new primate; thus it was that he turned every thing to the advantage of his own authority.

A system of policy and administration at length began to preside over the destiny of Russia; every thing fell into classes and into its place; the roads and their stations, the police, the army, were more regularly organized; the taxes more uniformly and better assessed. In the thousands of boyard-followers, new possessors of military fiefs, a kind of spahis, such as are still seen in Turkey, we recognise the institution of a petty feudal nobility, but without a gradation of rank, and dependant solely on the throne, the strength of which it constituted.

- A new code appeared; it regulated and taxed the

faculty which the peasants possessed of changing their lords; it determined the limits of slavery; and, though it was forced to confide to the nobles, and to those boyard-followers, the new proprietors, the dispensing of justice, it joined to them the elder, the chief men, and the civil functionary of the place.

As to the rest; in this barbarous code every thing partakes of the keenness of the sword, whose keenness is brought into action in every part of it. Single combat decides upon the majority of criminal offences; in cases of suspicion, where reputation is not spotless, torture is called in to enlighten justice. The penalties of Ivan's code are confiscation, the knout, slavery, and death, the level of his despotism; it is since his reign that the Russians have astonished Europe by their blind servility. Foreigners, as well as his subjects, denominate him Ivan the Great. The Russia of Oleg, of Vladimir, and of Yaroslaf, existed no longer; it is the Russia of Ivan III. reformed by Peter the Great, that still exists.

CHAPTER VI.

(1505.) VASSILI IVANOVITCH continued the ascendant impulse of his father's reign: he extended his power over Poland, from which he wrested Smolensk; over the revolted Kasan, which he drained to exhaustion, and over the republic of Pskof, where were sadly breathed forth the expiring sighs of Russian liberty.

Then (1533) commenced the reign of Ivan IV. The hideous scene opened by the saturnalia of that court which the two preceding autocrats had suddenly called into

existence, in the midst of coarse and brutal ignorance. Its nobles were barbarians, either upstarts or fallen from their pristine state. A great number of them were of the blood of Rurik. Formerly, the whole empire was the theatre of their ambition ; its dilaceration, its division into appanages, their end ; civil war, their means : but, now that all was concentrated in the prince, their sole arena was his court ; their end, the precarious power derived from favouritism ; their means, intrigue ; they were without rules, without manners, accordant to their novel situation ; they knew no other restraint than an iron despotism, whose rude and ponderous mass had fallen into the hands of a female of blighted character, the mother of an infant who was only three years of age.

Helena was the second regent of the Russians. Since the time of Olga, no similar instance had before occurred. Muscovite manners would have dictated that the widow of Vassili should be dead to the world ; that a convent and a new name should have hidden her sorrows from public view ; and the grandees were indignant to see the sceptre of Rurik in the hands of that Lithuanian widow, and of a lover, whom she dared to impose on them as a master.

For four years, however, the impure couple kept their ground by means of despotism. That weapon, so illegitimate that it fits any hand that dares to wield it, gave an answer to all ; to the indignation of the three uncles of Ivan, it replied by a lingering death in horrible dungeons ; to their partisans,—by torture, the cord, and the axe ; to those grandees who emigrated to Lithuania and Crimea, whence they brought back war,—by war and victory.

But, at length, crime did justice on crime ; tortures were avenged by poison ; the regent died suddenly, and the great boyards, of whom the majority were descended

from princes of the blood, who formerly held appanages, seized upon the guardianship of that same despotism of which their ancestors had been the victims.

In the foremost rank of these barbarians stood the Schuisky. They had long, and from father to son, been treated as the enemies of the Grand-Prince and of the state; their turn was now come to treat the state and its Grand-Prince as enemies. But the circle of their ambition was contracted amidst the crowd of other pretensions by which they were surrounded. They could only dilapidate the resources of the public, and of individuals, by their exactions; and avenge the fall of their ancestors, by the humiliations which they lavished on the heir of the Grand-Princes.

The empire was a prey which they suffered the Tartars to rend in pieces, while they themselves exhausted it by their rapine and dissensions, and ensanguined it by their proscriptions, which they did not even deign to cover with the name of their royal ward; for the youthful Ivan was not spared any more than his subjects. His treasury was plundered, his domains were encroached upon; masters of his palace, the great boyards seemed hardly to endure his presence there; they delighted in degrading him. In his clownish brutality, Schuisky was seen to stretch forth his legs, and with the unworthy weight of his feet sully the descendant of so many sovereigns.

The influence, however, of the Belsky, and of the primate, which was all at once increased by a Tartar invasion, awakened the patriotism of the nobles, restored some degree of order, and gave to the youthful Ivan a moment of dignity. But, when the danger was over, the Schuisky reappeared; they surprised Moscow in the dead of the night, and made themselves masters of the palace; they pushed

their brutal irruption even to the bed of their young master, whom they caused to pass suddenly from the calm of a sound sleep to all the palpitations of terror.

From this refuge they violently dragged the primate, whom they ill treated, deposed, and replaced by another; and Prince Belsky, whom they murdered. Ivan supplicated them, but they disdained his prayers, and drowned them by vociferations; if he ordered, they took a pleasure in disobeying; if they saw him regret his mother, who had been their victim, their scoffs turned his filial piety into ridicule. Did his heart open to the soft and vivid friendships of childhood, they lacerated it, they tore from it the innocent object. In a council, they brutally apostrophised Vorontzof, who gave them umbrage; they darted on him like madmen, loaded him with blows, and rent with their feet the garments of the primate, who, touched by the entreaties of the Grand-Prince, implored them to spare the young boyard whom they wished to sacrifice.

It was amidst these horrors that young Ivan reached his fourteenth year. The scene then changed, but in the personages only. This revolution was brought about by the Glinsky, who were kinsfolk of Ivan. All at once, in a hunting-party, an angry word, which they suggested to the Grand-Prince, thunderstruck the insolent Schuisky, and the whole train rushed immediately on that boyard, seized him, and threw him to the dogs, by which he was devoured.

But his tyranny survived him; it was continued in the name of the prince. The Glinsky pushed him forward at their head in this path of blood and plunder. They allowed him to misuse his recently acquired liberty. He squandered it in roaming without a purpose through his provinces, which were compelled to defray the charges; they were ruined by his costly presence, and astonished by

his caprices. There, his unworthy kinsmen prompted him to punish without cause, and to reward beyond measure; glutting some with what was confiscated from others. They taught him not to think himself master, except when he was striking, except when he was causing to be tortured before his eyes the suppliants by whose intreaties he was wearied.

These infamous beings made use of his youthful hand to massacre their enemies. Their dastardly subservience applauded his cruel sports, when he delighted himself with tormenting wild animals, and throwing down tame ones from the summit of his palace; when, in his disorderly rambles, he dashed old people to the ground, and trampled under the feet of his horses the women and children of Moscow.

These ebullitions, this fermentation of the effervescent youth of a tyrant, had lasted three years, when, one day, he awoke in Moscow, surrounded by the flames of a horrible conflagration and the clamours of revolt.

Ivan was only seventeen. Terror had been the first feeling of his infancy; long oppressed by its weight, his early youth had lately taken a delight in throwing it off upon the whole of his people; and now, from all points, that terror was rebounding back upon him in burning brands, in threatening cries, and in the blood of the Glin-sky, whom the furious populace had torn in pieces.

Amidst this universal disorder, Sylvester, a monk, one of those inspired personages who then traversed Russia, and who, like the Jewish prophets, or the dervishes, dared to stand up even against sovereigns, appeared in the presence of the frightened young despot. He approached him, the Gospel in his hand, his eye full of menace, his finger raised, and with a solemn voice, he pointed out to him, in the surrounding flames, and blood, and furious

cries, and the limbs of his dismembered kinsfolk, the wrath of Heaven, which his passions had at length aroused. To these terrific menaces he added the infallible effect of certain appearances then deemed supernatural; and, thus working on this feeble mind, he became its master.

Alexis Adascheff seconded Sylvester; they encircled the young tyrant with priests and able and prudent boyards; and, assisted by the young and virtuous Anastasia, his first and recently-married bride, they, during thirteen years, made Russia enjoy an unexpected felicity.

Every thing was now pacified and reduced to order; regularity was introduced into the army; the strelitz, a permanent militia of fusileers, were created; seven thousand Germans were hired and kept up; a more just and equal assessment of the military fiefs, services, and contingents, was accomplished; all proprietors of estates that required three hundred pounds weight of seed corn, were obliged to furnish a horseman completely armed, or an equivalent in money; a rate of pay for the soldiery was established, and was even doubled, to encourage such of the boyard-followers as should furnish a larger contingent than was imposed by law; and by these means the forces of the empire were so much increased, that they were thenceforth estimated at three hundred thousand men. The presence of the prince with his armies, at once re-established order in them, and stimulated to exertion. Kasan was once more reduced; the kingdom of Astracan was conquered; fortresses to keep the Tartars in check were constructed; and eighty thousand Turks, whom Selim II. had sent against Astracan, perished in the deserts by which it was surrounded. Meanwhile, the grand idea of the reign of Peter the Great, that of opening to Russia the commerce of Europe, by conquering the Ingrian and Livonian ports, was almost realized; the Don Cossacks were united with the empire;

and the ground-work was laid for the conquest of Siberia by Yermak, one of those nomade people.

So much for what relates to war ; as to the rest, we see the project of enlightening Russia conceived ; a hundred and twenty artists requested from Charles the Fifth ; the first printing-office established ; Archangel founded ; and the north of the empire thrown open to the commerce of Europe.

At the same time, the abolition of precedence among the nobility was begun to be abolished ; the greediness of the clergy, in its monopolizing of all landed property, was restrained ; those priests were improved in their morals, and in their observances, which were still deeply embued with paganism ; and the tolerant spirit of Adascheff prohibited the cruelties with which superstition inspired them.

To crown the whole, the laws were revised in a new code. Till then, justice had been administered by the Governors, who paid themselves out of fees levied at their own discretion. In 1556, Adascheff and Sylvester abolished all these fees, caused justice to be gratuitously administered by the oldest and most eminent persons of each place, and, finally, established a general assessment, which was collected by the officers of the Exchequer.

CHAPTER VII.

THE auspicious ascendancy of Adascheff lasted thirteen years. All the glory of the fifty years' reign of Ivan IV. is circumscribed within this brief space. Ivan himself, in 1563, bore witness to it, while he cursed it ; for, at that calamitous epoch, the death of the mild Anastasia, and a

violent disease which attacked the despot, seem to have alienated his mental faculties.

A salutary terror had kept down his ferocity; another terror again let it loose. Infamous delators instilled their venom; to the ministers whom they wished to replace, they attributed the death of the Tzarina, and the insubordination of the boyards, which they affirmed to be on the eve of breaking out; and, with that weakness which is inherent in cruelty, the superstitious Ivan persuaded himself that nothing but witchcraft could have enabled Adascheff and Sylvester to retain for so long a period their paramount sway over his mind.

In a letter, which still exists, all the benefits which Russia attributed to him, are urged against them by this madman, as if they were a protracted series of crimes—for the barbarian could write! his letters and many of his speeches are even remarkable. Like most insane persons, this frantic being now and then manifested scintillations of talent, which he made a parade of in sophisms, priding himself on his knowledge, and often reasoning with considerable acuteness.

In his actions, consummate craftiness may also be seen occasionally prevailing. In 1566, being on the eve of engaging in a dangerous war, he convoked an assembly of the states-general, consisting of three hundred and thirty-nine members, priests, nobles, citizens, and traders. He laid before them his negotiations with Poland, on the subject of Livonia; he pointed out to them the importance of preserving that outlet for the Russian commerce; he succeeded in obtaining from the bishops a declaration, that it did not become them to dare to advise their Tzar; from the nobles, that they were ready to shed for him the last drop of their blood; from the citizens and traders, that all their wealth belonged to him.

But, already, the modern Seneca and Burrhus of this Nero of the North had experienced a fate similar to that of the two prudent ministers of the Nero of Rome; thenceforth, drunk with blood, bewildered with terror, the life of the Moscovite tyrant was nothing but a long crime, a furious lunacy; the origin of which, however, may be perceived, and of which, amidst the wanderings of a heated and irregular imagination, we may discover and trace the ruling principle. It was the despot instinct of hereditary, innate, divine right, disturbed by fear; it was seventeen years of terror, received and repaid with interest in his childhood and his early youth, that gained the upper hand of thirteen years' efforts against nature. We seem to see a young tyger, which efforts have been made to tame, and which reverts with horrible ardour to its original propensities.

Even as early as 1552, at the capture of Kasan, his natural disposition had broken out. Apostrophizing the nobles who surrounded him, he then exclaimed, "At length, God has preserved me from you!"

Adascheff, however, had kept him within bounds for ten more years; but, in 1563, that first terror, with which the nobles had impressed his childhood, awoke, like a terrific phantom, in his mind; thenceforth, that evil genius was ever present to his thoughts. Very soon, the power of Sigismund, who united Lithuania to Poland, and contended with him for Livonia, and that of Stephen Battori, the successor of Sigismund, whose vigorous hand was felt by Ivan, exasperated his trembling and senseless rage; his frenzy was increased by the suspicion that his subjects connived with those princes.

In this burning and unintermitting fever of twenty-six years, the Russians reckon six violent paroxysms; in the first, which was occasioned by the flight of Prince Kurbsky*

* See the letters of Ivan and of Prince Kurbsky.

into Poland, he accused that prince of a design to render himself sovereign of Yaroslaf: he could not conceive how his subject, without bringing down the vengeance of Heaven upon his soul, could have dared to secure his head from him.

The boyards were reproached with the offences which they committed during his minority; the remembrance of those events bewildered him; the impression made by them was indelible; and the madman, always having before his mental vision a vast and perpetual conspiracy plotted against his power by the nobles, retired afar off, to Alexandrovsky, a fortress encompassed by a gloomy forest, the fit haunt of tyranny. The imagination of the moralist poet, in his description of the despot of Tyre, falls short of this reality.

The despot of Alexandrovsky, whose fear made his whole empire tremble, at length denounced to the clergy and the people the crimes of which the grandees had been guilty during his minority, and the new projects, which his frenzy attributed to them, against his own life and that of his son, and ended by declaring, that his wounded heart, resigned the government of a state which was so thronged with traitors.

On hearing this read, the people, whom at the same time the crafty despot had won by his flatteries, were astonished and aghast, and believed themselves to be lost: "Who thenceforth would defend them?" On their side, the priests and the nobles, either in consequence of the fear, with which the people inspired them, or of the universal spirit of servility, exclaimed, "That their Czar had over them an imprescriptible right of life and death; that he might, therefore, punish them at his pleasure; but that the state could not exist without a master; that Ivan was their legitimate sovereign, whom God had given to them,

the head of the church. Without him, who could preserve the purity of religion—who could save millions of souls from eternal perdition?" All set off, all hastened to offer him their heads; they struck with them the dust at his feet, hoping to move him by their lamentations, and bring him back by their prayers.

The dastards obtained this misfortune. Ivan appeared again in Moscow; but, at sight of him, every body was struck with astonishment. Their surprise is described by their historians. "Only a month," say they, "had elapsed since the absence of Ivan, yet they hardly knew him again. His large and robust body, his ample chest, his broad shoulders, had shrunk; his head, which had been shaded by thick locks, was become bald; the thin and scattered remains of a beard which was lately the ornament of his face, now disfigured it. His eyes were dull, and his features, marked with a ravenous ferocity, were deformed."

The acts of his mind corresponded with the disordered appearance of his person. Not satisfied with forming an entirely new household, court, and guard, he deserted the palace of his fathers, to construct, in Moscow itself, another fortress; he then drove out all the inhabitants of the adjacent streets, and posted his satellites there. To those satellites he soon after gave twelve thousand of the estates nearest to his capital, of which, in the depth of winter, he despoiled the rightful possessors.

Still uneasy, after so many precautions, the fear of God, joined to that of man—for this monster felt every kind of fear—prompted him to fly from Moscow, to return to Alexandrovsky, and to assume the monkish habit with three hundred of his minions.

At the same time, he abandoned to the trembling boyards the government of the empire; he derisively named them *the boyards of the commons*; he himself retaining only the

military power, the power of striking. And, nevertheless, his pusillanimity, which extended to every thing, covered the Russian banners with disgrace, which had hitherto been victorious over the Tartars and the Turks. In this third portion of his reign, Moscow and several hundred thousand Moscovites were again burned by the Tartars.

The madman, who had said to the Russians, "I am your God, as God is mine; whose throne, like that of the Omnipotent, is surrounded by winged archangels, and who sends forth armies of three hundred thousand men and two hundred cannon against his enemies," he trembled at the threats of the khan of the Crimea. An incursion of the Siberians terrified him; nor could he discard his fears till he learned that Yermak, a robber, and six hundred Cossacks, his accomplices, paid by a trader, and flying from the rigour of the Russian laws, had sufficed to reduce this new empire under his dominion.*

But it was of the anger of Battori that, above all things, he was afraid; he sent to that Prince his dastardly submissions, his abject supplications; he even, in the person of his officers, offered himself to the insults and blows by which the king of Poland might please to dishonour Russia and its Tzar.

Sweden, meanwhile, wrested Esthonia from this vile tyrant, while Battori deprived him of Livonia. Since 1556, those provinces, which were on the point of being conquered by the talent of Adascheff, had taken refuge, the one, under the Swedish sceptre, the other, in the arms

* This Yermak displayed, to the life, that likeness which has so often been asserted to exist, between the conqueror and the malefactor. A despised Cossack, a detestable captain of robbers, while his genius was cramped in his own country; and an admired conqueror, as soon as he was at liberty to astonish mankind, by performing abroad, and on a large scale, the same actions which had degraded him when he had committed them at home, and by piece-meal.

of Sigismund Augustus of Poland ; and Kettler, the last Grand-master of the Livonian knights, had reserved to himself only Courland and Semigallia.

It was then, (1581,) that, to the new supplications of the Tzar, who grovelled before him, Battori* deigned to reply only by branding him as a forger who falsified the articles of treaties, and a monster who tortured his subjects. "Where are you, then, God of the Russians, as you compel your unfortunate slaves to call you?" This insulting letter he closed with a challenge to single combat ; but Ivan, whose ambassadors he had recently dismissed, answered him only by fresh prostrations.

When, at length, to use the words of the Russian historian, "this cowardly Prince, whose mind was degraded by tyranny," had collected together three hundred thousand men, he did not dare to command them ; if he marched, it was under cover of the jesuit Possevin, the envoy of Rome, whose intervention with Battori he had fraudulently procured, by holding out to him as a bait the conversion of the Russians to Catholicism.

This long effort, however, against the Livonian knights, is worthy of remark ; its purpose, then avowed,† was, to give Russia outlets upon the Baltic, and the means of communicating with Europe. Its result was, to make these maritime provinces fall into more formidable hands ; but though this masterly idea belongs to Ivan's ministry, and the deplorable issue of it to Ivan himself, it is to this effort particularly that must be attributed the admiration, so often highly censured, which the greatest Prince of the Russians expressed of their greatest monster.

At length, the germ of that terror with which the early

* See the Correspondence of the two Princes.

† Karamain, vol. ix. p. 439.

years of the tyrant had been impregnated, expanding still more and more, he sometimes conjured up phantoms of revolted vaiwodes, ready to give him up to the Tartars, and then he flew far from his armies, which he dreaded ; and, at other times, he pictured to himself his boyards on the point of raising the whole empire in rebellion, to overthrow him, and to crush him with its collected weight. Then, neither citadels nor fortified convents seemed, in his eyes, to have power to save him ; it was an island beyond the seas, which alone appeared to be a safe asylum ; and he did not blush to request that asylum from Elizabeth of England !

But has not enough been said ? was it even necessary for the spirit of history to register this tedious series of the disgusting symptoms of such a deplorable case of monomania ? an aberration but too common in those despotic states, where men's heads are turned by their being exposed to too violent and sudden transitions, and to their being lifted up to such giddy heights. Must we continue to ensanguine these pages, by describing the horrible paroxysms of such evident frenzy ?

CHAPTER VIII.

INTERNALLY, every thing was bent down to earth ; and, yet, the abject submission with which Ivan IV. was surrounded did not tranquillize him ; his brain, shaken by the violent emotions of his infancy, and by his tyrant conscience, made ever present to him the phantom of a war *of the public good*. The strelitz did not suffice him ; he formed a

new guard of six thousand select men ;* in a word, of spies, informers, and assassins, ready to massacre all the grandees whom he might suspect to have the slightest memory of ancient independence.

He chose his guards from the lower class, in order to be sure that envy would make them participate in the hatred which he felt.

To these executioners he gave the property of their victims ; and thus transferred eminence and nobility from those, who, having long possessed them, had any prejudices, pretensions, or habitudes whatever, to entirely new men, without principles, without prejudices even, and who thought themselves but too happy to bend to any thing that was required of them, so that they might accumulate riches.

In his first fit of rage, several great boyards, of the family of Rurik, were put to death by beheading, poisoning, or impaling ; their wives, their children, were driven by the knout into forests, which echoed with their cries, and where they expired under the scourge. In a second paroxysm, he marched as a conqueror against the subjugated Novgorod ; and, imagining that he imitated, or perhaps surpassed, the victory of his grandfather, he pierced with his lance a throng of the unfortunate inhabitants, whom he had heaped together in a vast enclosure ; and when, at last, his strength failed to second his fury, he gave up the remainder to his select guard, to his slaves, to his dogs, and to the opened ice of the Volkof, in which, for more than a month, these hapless beings were daily engulfed by hundreds.

Then, declaring that his justice was satisfied, he retired ; seriously recommending himself to the prayers of the survivors, who took special care not to neglect obedience to the orders of their terrestrial deity.

* The Opritchiniks.

Tver and Pskof, also, experienced his presence; Moscow, at length, again saw him, and on the same day, the public square was covered by red hot brasiers, enormous cauldrons of brass, and eighty gibbets. Five hundred of the most illustrious nobles, already torn by tortures, were dragged thither; some were massacred amidst the joyful acclamations of his savage satellites; but the major part of them expired under the protracted agony of being slashed with knives by the courtiers of the Moscovite monster.

Neither were women spared any more than men; Ivan ordered them to be hanged at their own doors; and he prohibited their husbands from going out or in without passing under the corpses of their companions, till they dropped in decayed pieces upon them.

Elsewhere, husbands, or children, were fastened dead to the places which they had occupied at the domestic table, and their wives, or their mothers, were compelled to sit, for days, opposite to these dear and lifeless remains.

To the dogs and the bears, which this raging madman delighted to let loose upon the people, was left the task of clearing the public square from the mutilated bodies which encumbered it.* Every day he invented new modes of punishment, which his tyranny, jaded by so many excesses, still looked upon as insufficient. Very soon, he required fratricides, parricides! Basmanof was compelled to kill his father; Prozorovsky, his brother! The monster next drowned eight hundred women; and, rummaging with atrocious cupidity the abodes of his victims, he, by dint of shocking tortures, compelled their remaining relations to point out the places in which their wealth was hidden. These confiscations, joined to monopolies, taxes, and conquests, accumulated in his palace the riches of the empire

* According to the Annals of Pskof, there were sixty thousand victims at Novgorod alone.

and of the Tartars. To this he joined those of the Livonians, whom he plundered, though he could not conquer them.

In his long and fruitless wars against the Livonian knights, his transient successes were marked by frightful executions. The courageous resistance which the enemy opposed to him was, in his eyes, a revolt, and he ordered his prisoners to be thrown into boiling cauldrons, or spitted on lances, and roasted at fires which he himself stirred up.

Setting himself above all laws, this lustful being married seven wives; even his daughter-in-law was forced to fly, terrified by his lasciviousness. To complete his usurpations, he assumed the manner of one who was inspired,* and all those external signs which our bounded imagination attributes to the Divinity; he made himself god in the minds of his people. All that came from his hand, blows, wounds, even the most degrading treatment, was received with resignation, nay, with adoration. In the blind and servile submission of this people God and the Tzar were identified: their proverbial sayings bear witness to this; and to the influence of things and men was joined that of words, the power of which is more durable than it is sometimes imagined to be.

Finally, in a humble supplication, which was addressed to him by the most faithful of his subjects, his frenzy again saw a conspiracy of the boyards, of which the eldest of his three sons, and the only one who was capable of succeeding him, was to be the leader: transported with rage, the madman felled to the earth, with a mortal blow from a boar spear, this hope of his race, to expire himself soon after, consumed by regret without remorse, and giving orders for new executions.

* See his Letter to Battori.

CHAPTER IX.

EVERY thing was, however, bent to the ground, every thing was irrecoverably crushed beneath the throne, to fill which, after him, a dying man and a mere infant sufficed: the one was Fœdor; the other, Dmitry: both of them were his sons. It is true, that a prime-minister, that the son of a Tartar, in a word Boris Godunof, who governed for the first, destroyed the second, and succeeded to his master.

For it is not to the nobility, it is to the minister alone, that must be attributed the revolution which extinguished the race of Ivan in his successor. It was not even a revolution; but a mere court intrigue, like those at Constantinople in the time of the lower empire.

Ivan did not perceive, that what had preserved him during his minority, was the existence of the higher class of nobility. Had Schuisky, the oppressor of his childhood, not feared pretensions equal to his own, he would have seized upon the crown. In reducing every one around him to one level, Ivan overthrew all that could obstruct the designs of a prime-minister. The immense interval of terror between the throne and his subjects, was a field left open to the ambition of a vizir who might remain alone in it with the prince.

Accordingly, Fœdor being weak, he had his minister for his successor, and the race of Rurik ended in him.

For, what constitutes the danger of despotism to the despot is, that the authority which he entrusts is necessarily as despotic as his own. It is even more so; and the minister, in consequence of the sudden dangers to which

he is exposed, is forced to be doubly a despot, for his master and for himself. Thus, for this reason, that a despot cannot be so without terror, his minister cannot be minister without the exercise of a still greater terror.

In this state of things, let the despot be feeble, and a child the only obstacle to the ambition of his minister, is there not a probability that, in the person of the weak prince, the dynasty will be extinguished?

This is what happened under Fœdor, and what placed Boris Godunof on the throne: for, in fact, who was there to oppose it? The princes of the blood of the other branches?—they were confounded with the nobility! The nobility?—it was crushed! The clergy?—order and a master were, above all things, necessary to them! The regent nobles?—they were ephemeral beings, the creatures of the minister! The army, the guard?—here, too, in such cases, it is the minister who pays, forms, and commands it! The people?—what matters it to them! they have neither known nor felt the despot; these are mere court revolutions which never reach them! It is the affair of the great!

Here, then, we see, as often will be seen, the history of a nobility and a dynasty terminated by that of the despotism.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

THIS character of despotism and servitude is deeply rooted in Russia. There is always a principal cause of the distinctive character of a nation. The benefit which results from an institution always leads the people to adopt the spirit of that institution, to make a bad use of it, or conform to its abuses. Spain was subjugated by a hostile religion; it was by religion that Spain achieved its liberation, and fanaticism still rules in Spain. A foreign despotism, that of united central Asia, fettered Russia, which was enfeebled by anarchy; it was by the concentration of power that Russia recovered its independence, and, thence, despotism established itself in Russia, without encountering any obstacle.

But there are other particular causes of despotism in that empire. Extension and want of population are hostile to the compactness of the mass; in conjunction with the climate, they hinder large and continuous assemblages; they render men conscious of the weakness caused by being insulated; they perpetuate blind and credulous ignorance, by cutting off the communication of ideas; they confine observation within narrow limits, and thus the judgment cannot be exercised for want of objects of comparison; and the result is, the existence of only a scanty number of ideas, which,

however, have a stronger hold on the mind, from the habit of constant recurrence to them.

Thus the Russians of that period, having none of those connexions which enlighten, were unable to form for themselves a public opinion; they were obliged to take it from the court of the Grand-Prince; there was their oracle, their despot.

All these causes, so favourable to despotism, had, from immemorial time, destined the Russians to slavery.

There seem, however, to be some other causes perceptible. The last war has furnished numerous proofs to support the opinion of Montesquieu, as to the physical insensibility of the Russians. This grossness of the faculties of the lower class cannot be supposed to belong exclusively to their bodies, when we consider the close union subsisting between the mind and the body, which constitutes life. Now, what feeling is there which requires in the mind more sensibility, susceptibility, and irritability, than that of independence? This is why, in general, a temperate climate requires a temperate government. Is it not in our temperate climates, where the moral and physical irritability is the most equally balanced, that liberty has been longest established and maintained? In Africa and in India, where an extreme climate produces the same physical effect as in Russia, we again find servitude.

And, besides, had not Rurik the Great been a despot, a chief of that military despotism which follows conquest, his successors would speedily have been taught to become so, by the Greeks, and especially by the Tartars. This is the reason why the military ascendancy of the Varangian chiefs, which could not be naturalized at Novgorod, was established without any obstacle in the south,

where Asiatic oppression had paved the way for the military government, which was introduced from the north.

To all these causes, propitious to despotism, the Grand-Princes of Moscow joined their Machiavelism.

But in this history of slavery, some features of the moral aspect of the people, at this epoch, become necessary.

After what has been already said, it will excite little astonishment that the Russians of those days were inclined to dissimulation. They had been led to it by long servitude, and by the practice of concealing what they gained; that it might not be wrested from them by their masters. They were selfish and cheating, because they were poor, and because the major part of them had to purchase their liberty, and that all means appeared good by which they could obtain wherewithal to acquire so natural a right.

The priests, the only teachers of that age, were too coarse-minded to inspire morality. The people, therefore, had no education, not even that which example affords; for the nobles, at all times the models of the people, being surrounded, even from their cradles, by slaves, were not more civilized than the rest.

To form an adequate idea of the ignorance of the Russians, under Ivan IV. we must see them seriously entertaining the idea that, because, in the sixteenth century, traders came to St. Nicholas and to Archangel, to purchase their grain, timber, hemp, and caviare, therefore their country was the granary and the dock-yard of Europe, and that, without their aid, the Europeans would die of hunger and of cold ! We must also see them imagining themselves the best-informed people on earth, at the moment when astronomy, anatomy, and most of the sciences, appeared to them to be *diabolical* arts; when not even three of their priests knew Greek; when their only mode of reckoning

was by balls strung upon strings; and when the skins of beasts were still their current money! It was here, that a noble substituted in place of himself one of his servants, to receive the corporal chastisement awarded to perjury; and that, in the presence of the Tzar, and even to himself, persons could venture to say "Thou liest," without conceiving that they were offering an insult; for insults were punished by fines, blows, and banishment: judicial duels had not yet introduced those other duels, which honour elsewhere requires.

For such rude beings the penalties were equally rude, and, as manners and honour had no influence, the punishments were horrible.

Peculation was punished by whipping and public branding; but from the hands of the executioner the criminal returned to his office; this dishonoured the office, and divested the punishment of dishonour; or, rather, it implies a general want of honour.

The custom of the Grand-Princes choosing their consorts from among the collected daughters of the nobility; the slavery of prisoners of war; the long afternoon slumbers; the respect, the taste, for plumpness of person; the dead silence in the presence of the Tzar, so dead, that, a foreigner tells us, if the eyes were closed in the midst of the most numerous court, the spectator might have supposed himself in a desert; the bazars; the practice of boxing; the hiring of mourners at funerals; the length of the vestments, which is suitable to Asiatics, whose mild climate invites them to an indolence that is favoured by this mode of dress; the long beards; the monkish habit which Ivan, as well as several of his predecessors, assumed in their dying moments; and, lastly, the composition of its court, at once so unpolished and so sumptuous; all this proves,

that this nation had borrowed from the Greeks and Tartars only that which was most easily acquired—usages, prejudices, and vices.

These same usages excluded women from society; which may account for the sodomitism formerly charged upon the Russians. But who will dare to assign a natural cause for an unnatural abomination! We must seek elsewhere, and still farther, for the impure source of such depravity in so recent a nation. It is to be found in the boorishness of its customs; and here we are forcibly struck with the manner in which extreme civilization approximates to extreme barbarism. When adultery, incest, and sodomitism, the melancholy results of the effeminacy, luxury, and depraved imaginations, of our old capitals, we behold flourishing equally in these smoky dens, where, during such protracted nights, whole families were confusedly heaped together, we are indignant, without being astonished.

There existed at that period no such thing as society, at least in our acceptation of the word; for women, its connecting link, were banished from it. But, as reading and writing were unknown, there was a necessity for communicating by word of mouth. Every day, at noon, therefore, the people met in the public squares: it was there that business was transacted, that intelligence was spread; and that the education of youth was completed. This custom, also, the uneasy tyranny of Ivan IV. destroyed. He secretly introduced into these meetings his nefarious informers. Before the reign of this maniac, the Russians were accustomed to say, "If I break my word, may shame be my portion." But the monster extinguished the few remaining sparks of the rude honour of the days of old.

CHAPTER II.

IT is thus that, in the Russian history, every thing brings us back to the history of despotism.

By a horrible consequence of the principle of this hateful government, it was an established rule, that all the individuals of a family were involved in the punishment of a single member of it.

By another consequence, every subject who went beyond the frontier, became a traitor, who was daring to remove himself out of reach of the prince—out of the sphere of that terror which was the inspiring soul of the government; he was a fugitive slave, a rebel! Nay, much more than that; for was not his quitting that sacred territory an offence against his God, since he then breathed the infection of those hostile religions by which Russia was surrounded, and mingled with miscreants whose mere touch was contamination?

Religious superstition, and the superstition of power, were therefore the public opinion of that age; it drove back into the bounds of despotism every one who wished to quit them; there was no asylum from it; it was all-present. A father was as despotic in his wooden hut as the Tzar in the empire. The fetter was general; and, from the great to the small, from the grandsire to his latest born descendant, all formed one vast, connected chain of tyrants and of slaves.

There was, in fact, a law which allowed fathers to scourge their children with rods, and to sell them four times. The children were, therefore, the slaves of their fathers. Each

being was born a slave ; slavery showed itself everywhere. The Russian wives were more enslaved than the Asiatic ; their slavery, no doubt, was less strict, but it was more barbarous ; no law protected them from the violence of their husbands, who, like savages, often put in force against them the right of the strongest, as the caprice of temper, or passion, or drunkenness inspired them.

In the Russian laws of that epoch, against wives who murdered their husbands, we find the same cruelty that marked the Roman laws against slaves who killed their masters. Similarity of situation induced similarity of precaution.

From the slavery of the women may be inferred that of the men ; for the slavery of the one sex implies that of the other.

Another law authorized persons to sell themselves. All those who were ruined by the civil wars, and by the Tartars, were, in truth, under the imperious necessity of selling themselves, in order to subsist. Yet this law, while it proves slavery, proves also a sort of liberty ; for a man must have possessed his liberty before he could be able thus to dispose of it.

Now, should we be told, “ There exists a country in which prisoners of war are slaves ; where insolvent debtors are given to their creditors ; where the poor man may sell himself to the rich ; and where fathers have the right of selling their children three or four times ; to which must be added, that only one class there can possess landed property, which class is, by its nature, by usage, and by necessity, devoted to the profession of arms ; ” who is there who would not exclaim, that, within a given lapse of time, such a country must be composed of only nobles and serfs ?

And if it should be replied, that such a country existed,

and that, nevertheless, during six centuries, it had always a third estate, who would not then judge, that the vague existence of that order must have been indebted for its preservation to local circumstances, to the interests of the princes, to the weakness of the nobles, and to the system of binding the slave to the soil not having been yet introduced?

In fact, this people, originally free, by its division into tribes, till towards the end of the ninth century, was also free in the time of Vladimir the Great, by its being united in cities, of which several were commercial, and by the enormous extent of the country, and the small number of conquerors; and because that the Varangian leaders had not conquered with the view of plundering and proceeding onward, but to establish themselves, and that in many cities, as in Novgorod, it was as allies and protectors that they were received.

We know, also, that in many of those cities, the advantage of civilization was on the side of the vanquished. Besides, by the simple manners of those times, the prince and his subjects were on numerous occasions brought in contact with each other; as at common festivals, the public repasts, to which all were admitted, and the deliberations, in which all bore a part, because all had an interest in them.

The traders were held in estimation there; for, in a country without industry, and without any means of communication, they were the great connecting link, especially with foreigners. It was, besides, necessary to have recourse to them for every thing that was wanting; accordingly, they always constituted a body in the state. We see them appearing prominently in treaties, in elections, in the assemblies of the cities, in those of the nation even; they were indispensable, in consequence of their numbers, their connexions, and their wealth.

We have remarked the duration, for six centuries, of the warlike and commercial republic of Novgorod. Pskof, the paramount ruler of twelve cities, and Viatka, were equally free; it even appears that, like them, each city that was founded before the Tartar domination, had its boyards, denominated Boyards of the Commons; its tissiasky, a military leader appointed by the citizens, taking precedence of all the boyards of the Princes, and even of those of the Grand-Princes;* lastly, its trial by jury; and, above all, its vetché-bell, or assembling of the people; “the voice of the supreme national power, often seditious, and always dear to the Slavonians.” By an ancient law of Pskof, the husbandmen of its territory were constituted, in perpetuity, its tributaries and labourers; for, with the exception of some onodvortzy, country landholders, it seems that there were no landed proprietors, except military persons, traders, and citizens.

The peasants of the lowest class, however, were not bound down to the soil, but had the privilege of hiring themselves to whom they pleased, either for life or for a term.

This is highly worthy of notice; in this mainly consists the difference between the feudal times of the Russian people, and those of the rest of Europe. The right of the strongest was then every where predominant. In Europe, the nobles having gained the upperhand of the cities and princes, the necessity of some kind of order gave rise there to the feudal hierarchy, and the inhabitants of the towns and of the country were slaves. Among the Russians, the princes having remained masters of powerful cities, and the country free from feudal manors, the plebeians were protected; there was no bondage to the soil, no serfs, but

* Karamsin.

farmers and hired servants; and in cities, a tribunal to make their contracts be respected.

Now, from the liberty and the protection afforded by the cities, we must conclude, that the peasants continually deserted their fields, where they were at the mercy of all the individuals of the military class, to be hired in the cities, and to seek their fortune there; that, consequently, those cities were exceedingly populous, and were sometimes summoned to the councils and elections of princes; and that, in the commercial cities especially, the commercial class must have often enjoyed the pre-eminence. How, then, happened it that liberty was not the result? for, in all ages, cities have been its cradle and its asylum.

But, too far apart from each other in that immense space, they acted without concert: when we are speaking of Russia, the words *distance*, *extension*, *dispersion*, perpetually present themselves, and are always applicable.

Besides, the country being in general extremely flat, it affords few of those positions of difficult access in which liberty delights.

Those cities, with their walls of earth and resinous timber, could not have been very secure places of refuge. In the thirteenth century, we see them almost all burned by the Tartars; again, under Ivan IV. we see that most of those which the Poles besieged they compelled to surrender by setting fire to their ramparts. Such cities, strong enough against the nobles, were weak against their princes, and could not do without them.

It must be remembered, that the great number of those princes, and the scarcity of cities, had caused each of the latter to become an appanage, and that the faithful band, by which each prince who held an appanage was surrounded, com-

posed for him a permanent and formidable body-guard. Could the municipal government long subsist in the presence of those princes ?

Add to this, a perpetual state of hostility, and the continual danger to which each city was exposed ; whence originated the preponderance of the military government, which, next to the theocratic, is the most absolute of all. Hence resulted the loss of their primitive liberty to those cities which were not, like Novgorod, rendered secure from civil wars by their power, and from the nomade wars by their northern situation.

Concentrated in this great Novgorod, the ancient liberty of the Slavonians flourished there for six centuries and a half, in despite of the Russian princes, of their guards, and of the Tartars.

It was under Ivan III. that the original despotism of the Grand-Princes of the family of Rurik, reinforced by the civil and superstitious despotism derived from Grèce, inherited also the savage and Asiatic despotism of the Tartars ; every thing, even the great Novgorod, completely sank beneath and was levelled under the weight of this triple despotism.

At length, on this soil, several times conquered in mass, and a thousand times in detail, we find, at the opening of the sixteenth century, after Ivan III. nothing but a victor and the vanquished ; or, in other words, a master and slaves.

In the formless hierarchy of these slaves, even order, the only bearable side of servitude, did not exist ; so much did the chances of force and of circumstances decide every thing. It was not till about the year 1600, that the bondage of the peasant to the soil was introduced there, at the moment when it ceased in the rest of Europe : this was the crowning of that misery which it was necessary to

endure, to escape at length from the chaos ! A calamity which was become indispensable, since there was no salvation to be obtained but by concentrating all the tyrannies into one ! The sole measure which, in this empire of evil, could combine the army, the taxes, in a word, all the means of government, in the hands which had the strongest interest in the maintenance of order and of public tranquillity ! While this tranquillity lasted, it must produce an increase of the population, the means of intercourse, knowledge, wealth, and all that naturally and inevitably brings forward, and at last fixes, on a firm basis, the liberty of the people.

It was the usurper Godunof, then the prime-minister of Fœdor, who crushed Russia with this final chain.* In a very short time, there were no longer even hired servants ; commerce fell into the hands of the slaves of the nobles, and the cities were filled with serfs.

Surprise has been manifested, that, in this land of slavery, bondage to the soil was so late introduced ; but, the country having been rather under a feudality of princes than of nobles, it must have been the interest of the princes, against the nobles, not to render them proprietors of their peasants. Besides, this institution could not be transmitted thither by the Greeks, who were unacquainted with it when the Russians imitated them, and still less by the nomade tribes, when the latter subjugated Russia.

To say that every thing was then in confusion, is again to assign the reason of many circumstances.

When, however, the public and private interest had raised and firmly fixed a single throne on the ruins of the princes holding appanages, and of the higher class of nobility who replaced those princes, the sovereign, who

* See Tatischev.—See the law of 1592 or 1593 ; the Edict of 1597 ;—Karamsin, Divof, Weydemeyer.

had a hold over the nobles and cities by their property, knew not how to reach the lower class of the community, which was so widely dispersed; he was obliged to render each proprietor responsible for the peasants whom he employed. But those proprietors could not be answerable for men who had voluntarily entered their service, nor have them forthcoming when the wants of the state required them: at the beginning of the fifteenth century, we witness the paternal administration of a Prince of Twer, attracting into his states the population of the neighbouring principalities.

Thus, a continual fluctuation of the people prevented the recruiting service and the taxes from being established on a fixed basis: with such mutability, the creation, by Ivan III. of three hundred thousand subordinate landholders, from the mass of boyard-followers, subject to military service, and the assessment of a tax on their ploughs, would have produced but a very uncertain result.

Accordingly, when, after Ivan III. the Grand-Prince was possessed of an army, and had no longer any fear of the nobles, it became his interest to introduce the bondage of the peasant to the soil.

Well-informed Russians add, that Boris Godunof, embarrassed in his usurpation by the remains of the great families, felt that the petty nobility, being envious, greedy, and less united, would be more pliant; that one of the means which he employed to gain over the poor proprietors, of which the nobility was composed, was to secure to them the husbandmen, of whom hitherto the rich had easily deprived them; and that this was an additional cause of making the peasant a bond-slave irremovable from the soil.

Another motive is also assigned for this barbarous institution. The natives of the south were always free; that

circumstance, and the climate, drew thither the peasants of the north. It appears that the armies, when they withdrew from Kasan and Astracan, left behind them numbers of soldiers : from the concourse of people to the cities, from these desertions or migrations,* and from the vagabond habits which prevailed, arose the depopulation of the rural districts, robbery, and famine. Great evils were put a stop to, by a lesser evil ; bondage to the soil rendered the proprietors responsible for their peasants, and brought back the latter to their agricultural labours.

CHAPTER III.

HERE, then, we see one order of the state swallowed up by despotism : the clergy did not escape with better fortune. We have observed, at the epoch of the resuscitation of the paramount sovereignty, the clear-sighted policy of that clergy, in forming a close alliance with the lineal descendants of the Muscovite Grand-Princes.

We know, too, how immense, after the tenth century, were the privileges of that order ; and yet, its constant inferiority before the religious supremacy of the Grand-Princes, was, at all periods, an indisputable fact. Among a multitude of historical proofs, we see that, in 1440, Byzantium, on the eve of falling into the power of the Turks, implored aid from Rome ; the Greek patriarch offered his apostasy in exchange ; and Isidore, a Bulgarian, then primate of Russia, dared to bring back, even into Moscow, his submission to the Pope. The astonished Russians remained silent ; for it rested with their Grand-Prince to

* See Weydemeyer, Karamsin, &c. &c.

decide what should be their belief. But he, anathematizing the traitor, cast down the apostate Greek from his see, and elevated to it a faithful Russian.

The deposition of these primates, therefore, depended on the Grand-Prince; this is attested by many other examples. At the close of the fourteenth century, Dmitry Donskoi deposed the primate Pimen; and, at a later period, in a synod held by Alexis, father of Peter the Great, the principle was solemnly recognized.

Up to 1448, however, with the exception of six primates, all these heads of the Church were Greeks; their election was even purchased from the patriarch of Byzantium by rich presents. Accordingly, the quarrel respecting investitures was endeavoured to be raised here, as it was elsewhere, but the attempt proved abortive.

At this epoch, the primate Jonas declared himself independent on the Church of Byzantium. Five years afterwards, in 1453, the Greek Empire fell to pieces; the patriarch of Constantinople became nothing more than a subject of a Turk; and the religious authority of the Grand-Prince was enhanced by this degradation. Truly the head of the Russian clergy, he regulated its discipline, and reformed its manners, by his edicts. It was he who maintained theological discussions against the envoys of the Pope; he compelled the property of the Church, like other property, to furnish a horseman and a foot soldier for every hundred acres; and he dipped deeply into the treasures of the convents. In a very short time, his caprice rendered precarious all the offices of the Church; primates were made and unmade at his pleasure.

At length, in 1588, two Greek bishops bargained for the pontificate of Byzantium, which was put up to the highest bidder by the grand vizier. Jeremiah, one of them, being overcome in this shameful contest, hastened to Russia, to

procure the gold which was necessary to buy the patriarchate of Greece, and the deposition of his rival: for this base and obscure triumph, which he owed to the liberality of Fœdor, the last of the Ruriks, he paid by selling to him the independence of the Russian Church, and the right of possessing a patriarch in Russia. It was thus that the religious supremacy, like all the others, was at length united in one individual.

When, however, we call to mind that, for six centuries, there had, in this land of darkness, been but one science, that of theology; but one book, the Gospels; but one corporation, the clergy; but one constant rule, one invariable doctrine, one inflexible discipline, that of the Church; it excites astonishment that this organization in the midst of confusion, this creation in the midst of chaos, should not have acquired a domination over all things.

How, in reality, did it happen that, with the mighty and profound philosophy of its religion, its positive, absolute, and highly-menacing doctrines, and its impressive forms, it should always have been in subjection to the temporal authority? How was it, that its judicial authority, its superstitious influence, which several times destroyed with fire and sword the germs of schism; its wealth, which was so enormous, that in 1570,* it possessed two-thirds of the estates of the empire; did not render it formidable even to the head of the empire?

It arose from that head being also its own; he united the two powers; he presided over the councils: for such was always the spirit of the Greek religion. Constantinople, the religious metropolis of the Russians, uniformly considered its princes as the vicars of God upon earth. This dates from the pagan emperors. The pontificate

* See the English Traveller, edition of 1551, and the treaties of that period with the Cossacks.

was one of their principal attributes: to their successors, the Christian emperors of the Lower Empire, something of this remained, in their pretensions, and in the minds of their people; and on this the Grand-Princes and their nation modelled themselves.*

In truth, the bishops of Constantinople, being perpetually in the presence, and under the hand of the master, could not, like the bishops of Rome, establish for themselves a sovereignty; so that they always continued subject in spirituals as well as in temporals. Their ambition was limited to making themselves patriarchs, and, afterwards, to rendering themselves independent on the Pope; but this they could accomplish only by leaning for support on their emperors, by placing themselves behind them, and there they remained.

This pointed out to their inferiors, the Russian primates, a far lower station beneath the Grand-Princes. But, indeed, had they not had this example in their foreign head, who was their model, they could not have avoided taking that station. In Russia, obedience to the offspring of Rurik, to the princes of the blood of St. Vladimir, was a religion almost as powerful as that of Christ; the descendants of St. Olga, of St. Vladimir, of St. Alexander Nevsky, the apostles, the founders, the martyrs of that religion, appeared to the people to be its legitimate heads.

Finally, it was only as a body that the Russian clergy could have become formidable to its Grand-Prince; now, the domestic commotions, the extent of the country, and the scantiness of its population, kept asunder the parts of that body; so that, having no unity of action, it possessed no political strength.

But the principal reason of this want of unity in that clergy, is to be found in its internal constitution. The

* See Gibbon, Condillac, &c. &c.

Greek religion calls for the marriage of its priests; this alone is sufficient to prevent them from forming, as priests do elsewhere, a single and great family, since here, each priest has one of his own. These marriages divide into a multitude of private cares and interests that common interest, that collective ambition, that corporate spirit, which would otherwise have been the sole and constant occupation of all its members.

Besides, these popes, morally insulated and dispersed, as they physically were by the extent of the country, were the only persons who had the right of confessing; while, on the other hand, the monks who, being unmarried, united, and forming a body free from heterogeneous mixture, were the only men who could make a bad use of that dangerous right, were not allowed to exercise it.

The bishops, it is true, were all drawn from the convents; but there were few bishoprics: besides, in those periods of confusion and war, when the monasteries ceased to be the sole asylum from the Tartars, the great could benefit little by immuring themselves within a cloister; and as, to follow this vocation, some little knowledge was also requisite, against which the nobles resolutely set their faces, the clergy, so entirely disunited, consisted only of the lower class of the people; a circumstance which caused them to be held in but mean estimation.

Is it, therefore, surprising, that such a clergy should have followed the example of slavery which was set by the rest of the nation; and that, after having so effectually contributed to elevate the prince, they should have wanted strength to make head against him?

CHAPTER IV.

SUCH is the spirit of the history of the Russian clergy. That of the people has already been sketched ; there now remains the task of attempting to give an idea of the Russian nobility in all the stages of its existence, till its fall into that abyss of slavery marked by the reign of Ivan IV. For, unfortunately, it is in the history of despotism that the history of those three orders at length terminates.

By dint of poring on the darkness of those annals, the eye becomes accustomed to their obscurity. We are, therefore, enabled to perceive, in the ninth century, the commencement of that nobility, the existence of which is so indefinite, that it almost eludes our grasp.

The Varangians were terrible men ! under Rurik and his first successors, they conquered all European Russia ; and when Vladimir and Yaroslaf tottered on the throne, it was by them that those monarchs were re-established.

It is from them, especially, that the Russian nobility derives its origin.

The law of war then in force, which reduced the vanquished to slavery ; and the necessity which each conqueror was under, of relying only on his army, of depending on it, of satisfying it, of giving it an interest in the preservation of his conquests by means of establishments ; in fine, the impossibility of barbarians governing a barbarous country otherwise than by a misshapen and coarse feudality ; all these circumstances were the cause that the Varangians, and those Slavonians who opportunely submitted to and assisted them, shared the country among them-

selves, became answerable for it to their leader, and were nobles.

That Slavonian warriors and tribes, either received as friends, or subdued, did at that period, and subsequently, mingle with those conquerors, does not admit of doubt. But this is of little consequence. The stock was Scandinavian, and its sap pervaded all the grafts: it resembled those corporations which, though the members are perpetually changed, are still unalterably inspired with the same spirit.

This nobility, which, like so many others, was of Scandinavian origin, also commenced, like so many others, with a victorious people, cantoned in the midst of a conquered people; and if this haughty origin did not, as happened elsewhere, promptly transform, in the hands of the nobles, the cantonments into fiefs, and the fiefs into sovereignties, it was because the manners, the place, the times, and the circumstances, combined to prevent such a natural consummation.

In fact, the Russian nobility, unlike that of the rest of Europe, was not the rival of the sovereign authority; it was never looked upon in any other light than that of a faithful militia, conformably to the manners of its progenitors, and the spirit of its institution.

Nevertheless, it must be noticed that, under the reign of Vladimir, the Lord of Polotsk had already enfranchised himself from the authority of the Prince, as was done by the Counts in France. But, as there were few cities, and as the Princes of the blood became very soon as numerous as the cities, the cities were assigned as appanages for the Princes, before the Lords, who were too remote from each other, could confederate, and maintain their ground.

Accordingly, it was an unheard-of thing in the Russian

history, that a single noble should dare to contend against a single Prince invested with an appanage ; so weak, without exception, did the nobles remain, in consequence of the multiplicity of Princes of the blood, and the scarcity of cities, of which, indeed, there were barely enough to provide appanages, so that there were none for any but Princes.*

Amidst those vast deserts, the populous and walled cities must have possessed a high relative importance. Travellers of the fifteenth century tell us, that cultivation existed only in the neighbourhood of cities. Those cities were of such magnitude, that, in 1602, Moscow could lose a hundred thousand men by various scourges. The population of Novgorod we know. This does not prove that the territory was more populous than it now is ; but merely that, in those times of confusion and barbarism, fear collected and compressed the people into cities, who, if they had remained dispersed over the country, would have been unable to live there in safety..

The same fear retained the nobles in the cities ; and, indeed, how was it possible that the proud and arrogant individuality, the insulation of a feudal life, could exist in so rude and gloomy a climate, and on a soil so thinly peopled, so flat, every where accessible, particularly in winter, and threatened with such sudden and furious incursions ?

Now, the nobility must necessarily have continued without strength, and without personal independence, in a country where cities alone could afford protection. In fact, in their desert plains, every thing was wanting to

* Among other examples, it may be remarked that, under Vladimir the Great, Rostof and Murum, fiefs which, since the time of Rurik, had belonged to Varangian chiefs, were taken from them, to be given to the sons of the Grand-Prince.—Karamsin, vol. i. p. 294.

them, even stone, and even the steep positions which are indispensable in the construction of those strong castles, with which every other part of Europe was covered by the nobles. This was the reason why they were under the necessity of residing in the cities, and of being dependent on them, or on the princes by whom they were governed.

It was, therefore, not merely the multiplicity of princes, it was the power of the cities, and the necessity of living there, that constituted the weakness of the Russian nobles; for nobility, by its very nature, is rustic; no sooner does it mingle with large bodies of men, who, by coming in contact, acquire knowledge and a consciousness of their strength, than it sinks beneath the weight of so many combined interests and personal feelings, or beneath that of the prince who becomes its protector.

Accordingly, it is proved that, in the rich and formidable Novgorod, all offices, even that of the boyard,* were, as late as the end of the fifteenth century, elective and temporary.

In the life of Isiaslaf, (twelfth century,) we see that the boyards were the servants of the princes, and were then held in but little estimation; a speech of Sviatoslaf (1176) proves that a boyard was deprived of his head for crimes which would have cost a prince only his appanage.

The oath which Ivan III. required from the boyards who desired to transfer their services to him, shows how complete was their subjection. The law of Novgorod manifests the care with which the cities kept down their boyards; the Novgorodian boyard who was found guilty of any violence was fined fifty rubles, while, in a similar

* This word boyard is derived from *boye* (combat), for nobility had, every where, its origin in valour.

case, a citizen of eminence paid only twenty, and the rest, but ten.

From these facts, the conclusion is, that there were no feudal nobles in Russia, except the princes invested with appanages; the nobles were rather their guards, and leading men, among whom the equal division of inheritances, till the time of Peter the Great, and four centuries of continual disorders, perpetuated the amovability of fiefs, of offices, and even of estates.

It was, in an especial degree, the frequency of revolutions in the appanages that occasioned the other properties so often to change hands; every new prince was obliged to satisfy his guards and his dependents, and this alone sufficed to establish, *de facto*, the principle of amovability.

Every kind of succession, therefore, was incessantly interrupted among these nobles or leading men, or, in other words, among the civil and military officers, and the cavaliers of the princes and the cities, the precarious possessors of estates, pay, and dignities, on condition of civil and military service.

From this followed as a consequence, that, not being able to gain consideration except by these temporary places and dignities, these nobles remained in obscurity under the standards of the cities, and of that throng of princes of the blood, who constituted the higher and genuine nobility.

Nor must it be forgotten, that, as liberty could be sold, and as bondage to the soil did not yet exist, the rich and the powerful must have drawn every thing around them, the farmers, the hired servants, and even these nobles; now, the rich and the powerful could be only the princes; and thus circumstances must have contributed to keep the nobles in an enfeebled state.

Accordingly, notwithstanding the intervention of the

boyard-followers, endowed by Ivan III., we again find in the sixteenth century, as in the code of the eleventh, the administration of justice in the hands of jurors, leading men and elders of the place, or in those of judges chosen by the Princes. Fines, which were the punishment allotted to the majority of crimes, were always paid into the treasury of the prince; the dispensing of justice, therefore, remained with the throne; and there was not in Russia, as elsewhere, on the part of the nobles, any usurpation of this main branch of the sovereign authority.

This is the reason why, till the close of the fourteenth century, the Russian history recognizes but two powers, that of the princes and that of the cities. These causes were so decidedly those of the insignificance of the nobility, down to the time of Dmitry Donskoi, (1354) that we see this class all at once begin to figure in history, as soon as the princes were blended with it, and the Tartars expelled. Its first family names even do not date farther back than the end of the fourteenth century; till then, by-names and surnames were the only distinctions.

But, when the union of Moscow and Vladimir, the support of the clergy, that of the Tartars, the new order of succession, the long duration and the spirit of the reigns of the first princes of Moscow, and the introduction of fire-arms, (1389) which are the weapons of the richest, had composed a central and sovereign force, the eyes of all the weak were attracted by that power; to escape from the Tartars, from the tyranny of their princes, and from the system which rendered their offices and their fortunes merely temporary, the nobles rallied round that power, and gave to it a further augmentation. It was thus that, by degrees, the nobles, who were the vassals of the petty princes, deserted them, and became vassals of the Grand-Prince, so that, thenceforth, only a single sovereignty existed in Russia.

As the Grand-Princes continued, for a considerable period, to dread their kinsmen, they preferred to them the nobles and the converted Tartar princes; the consequence of which was, that, towards the end of Ivan the Third's reign, we hear only of the nobles; who began to grow powerful, by virtue of so many preferences, their mixture with the decayed petty princes, and their assistance having become necessary to the possessor of the throne.

Thus, after having raised each other, the Grand-Prince and the nobles alone remained in the field. We have already seen, in the fourth period of the Russian history, by what a tremendous victory the Grand-Princes at length brought this final contest to a triumphant conclusion.

CHAPTER V.

SUCH a result excites little astonishment; but the circumstance which surprises is, that, in its system of government, Russia had not fallen behind the general march of European policy. Here, as elsewhere, and notwithstanding the Tartars, its feudality of princes, and even of nobles, rude as it was, had lasted from the end of the tenth century to the sixteenth; and here, still more than elsewhere, the sixteenth century was fatal to it. In Russia, as in the rest of Europe, by the re-establishment of the lineal succession, and the uniting the fiefs to the royal domain, this age was that of the concentration of power on the throne.

What cause, then, was sufficiently eminent and powerful to give so uniform a political impulse to so many diffe-

rent empires, so widely extended; and that, too, in spite of such dissimilar circumstances and localities?

Ought we to seek for its general principle in the universality of that great inundation of the northern tribes, which, thanks to the drying up of its source in the tenth century, was terminated every where at the same epoch? for the definitive invasion of Russia by the Varangians coincides with the end of those of France and England by the Normans. Ought we, in short, from this common origin, to infer the sequence, the identity, the almost simultaneousness of consequences and general effects, over such immense spaces, and during so many centuries?

In fact, sameness of origin, at a contemporaneous period, had, nearly at the same time, produced similar calamities throughout Europe, which had required the same remedy, and almost at once called forth, to combat them, men possessing minds of the same temper; hence it was that every thing then, and in all quarters, tended to concentrate all political power on the throne.

Accordingly, as it happened in Russia, under the great Ivan III. (from 1462 to 1500), we see, at the close of the fifteenth century, the scattered members of France re-united under Louis XI. and Louis XII.; those of Spain, under Ferdinand and Isabella; those of Germany, under Maximilian the First, of Austria; lastly, those of England, under the Tudors, in 1485, by Henry VII. So, also, in the following age, that of Ivan IV., of Henry VIII. and of Elizabeth, and of Philip II.; and soon after, in France, under Richelieu; we perceive that the universal success of this principle of concentration was productive of its universal abuse.

In Russia, meanwhile, this great political movement, of the concentration of power in Moscow, acquired the ascendancy, abroad as well as at home, over all that surrounded

it; then, more than ever, it was, that priests, people, nobles, in a word, the whole nation, almost crushed, indeed, but united under the weight, became still farther aggrandized. In reality, notwithstanding the mad fury of Ivan IV., Kasan, Astracan, and Siberia, in short, eighty-eight thousand square miles, and two millions of subjects, were added to the empire.

Here, then, thanks to the concentration of power in the hands of the Grand-Princes, as well as to the dissensions of the Tartars, we see the last grand Asiatic invasion of Europe at length driven back, and doubtless for ever, upon Asia itself.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE exists, however, another fact, which assigns a cause of another nature to this revolution of Europe against Asia. It is this,—that Europe continually increases its strength by its progress towards perfection, while, on the contrary, in both those points of view, Asia remains in a stagnant state.

To explain the reason of this moral superiority of Europe over Asia, after having attributed it to the influence of the different religions professed by those two quarters of the globe—the one, the religion of the mind, which contributed so greatly to enlighten and soften the Russians; the other, that of the sabre, an instrument of darkness; after having also remarked, that the nature of the climate and soil required that the natives of the one should, in all ages, be citizens and cultivators (the third stage of civilization), and retained those of the other in a pastoral and

migratory life, which is only the second stage of it; let us seek in the geography of those countries for a new and more general cause of the advantage enjoyed by the north of Europe over central and northern Asia.

And, in the first place, let us admit that there is no civilization where the means of intercourse do not exist; that water is the most ready of those means; and that the people who possess the greatest facility of inter-communication, have at all periods been the most capable of being civilized, and of reaping all the benefits consequent upon the civilized state. Look on the old territory of southern Europe, with its surface uneven, carved out, intersected, and riven by several seas: and thence its temperate and changeful climate; which gives to minds the variety, the impulse, the agitation, that incessantly impels them to advance, from discovery to discovery, in the vast field opened to the human intellect; and, lastly, gives that fondness, that longing for liberty, by which the expansion of intellect is favoured.

Now, under this point of view, let us look at European Russia and Northern Asia, empires wholly consisting of land, and of plains, consequently, with a climate subject to few changes; and having, also, no natural and easy means of communication, such as exist in countries that have considerable bodies of water: hence, minds less stirring, less restless, caring little for novelties, the major part of them stagnant, uniform, motionless; hence, depopulation, ignorance, and, as the last result, despotism! What fears for their civilization do not such numerous obstacles compel us to feel!

And, in truth, on these two centres and northern portions of Asia and Europe, on these two dense and enormous masses of frozen land, through what endless deserts, what profound marshes, what impenetrable forests, had it

not to force its way ! Yet a few rays sufficed ; but the least inland of these masses, that which lay nearest to European civilization, was the first to be enlightened by them ; a tardy light, it is true, and long weak and doubtful, but which, notwithstanding, from the fifteenth century, began to give to Europe a definitive and thenceforth irrevocable superiority over Asia.

As far back as five centuries, some sparks of that highly vivifying light had by degrees penetrated into the mass of Russian darkness, by the Black, White, and Baltic seas. Those which darted from Greece, pierced by the way of Kief ; those from Italy, by Asoph ; and those from England and Germany, by Riga, Novgorod, and Archangel. And when, about 1396, the destruction of Asoph was effected by Tamerlane, and, in 1453, that of Byzantium by Mahomet, European Russia had already received, through the four seas, a degree of knowledge so superior to that of Northern Asia, that it enabled her to resist the foe, and even to conquer him in her turn.

Thus, thanks to the concentration of power, however it may have been misused, and to some gleams of civilization, we behold almost dissipated, by the last of the Ruriks, “ one of the two horrible spectres,* which,” (as the old Russians dolorously exclaimed) “ rose on the right and on the left of Russia, and wholly concealed her from the view of the civilized world.”†

But the second of these hostile phantoms still existed ; and, as it was placed between Russia and its civilization, it was not by the superiority of knowledge that it could possibly be made to vanish : the fall of the Ruriks rendered it even more menacing. Favoured by civil dis-

* See Karamsin.

† The Horde and Lithuanian Poland. If, indeed, we can give the name of spectre to the most generous, the most brilliant, and the most chivalric of modern nations !

sensions, it took its seat even in Moscow itself; but we shall soon see the ascendant march of the Princes of Moscow resumed under the Romanofs, and the "great spectre of the West" disappear before the second Russian dynasty, as that of the East had bowed down before the first.

Before we hasten onward in the second part of this vast career, and while we pause to breathe, let us seek, by comparing, from its outset, the political movement in Russia and in Poland, to discover the chief causes of the successes and reverses of those two states, during their protracted contest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE fabulous times of those two empires extend down to the middle of the ninth century. Then began in Poland the great dynasty of the Piasts, almost contemporaneously with that of the Ruriks in Russia. But the latter descended all at once from the Ossianic heights of Scandinavia, completely royal, completely armed, and as a conqueror; while the origin of the other, purer it is true, but citizenish and common, had in it nothing antique, mysterious, or menacing, and the remembrance that it was elective was deeply rooted in the minds of its subjects.

In the second half of the tenth century, these empires had again, and both at once, their greatest warrior and politician, Mieczlas and Vladimir. Both made their people Christian; but the one, taking his religion from Byzantium, became the head of it, and thus to his civil and military power, added the theocratic power, one of the deepest roots of the autocracy of his descendants; while

the other, yielding to the Pope, was, in the eyes of those over whom he ruled, nothing more than the subject, not merely of an ultramontane bishop, but of all his own subjects, who might happen to be enrolled in the ambitious militia of the new Rome, which was no less bent upon conquest than the old.

So far, in this parallel, every thing is to the advantage of Russia, with respect to the centralizing of power, and consequently with respect to strength: but here the balance is destroyed. Fortunately, the Russian and Polish dynasties were, at first, not exceedingly fruitful; each successively produced only a single heir to the throne; but with the Russian this was the case only till 915; while it continued to be so with the Polish till 1137; so that the partitions of Poland among the Piast Princes did not commence till a century and a half later than those of Russia among the Ruriks. This circumstance gave to the Poles a superiority over the Russians, the result of which was the repeated capture of Kief, and of those provinces of the south of Russia which were dependent on that capital.

To this humiliation of the Russians, caused by their intestine quarrels, must be added the overwhelming of their empire by the Tartars, which produced the liberation of Lithuania, till then under the yoke of the Russians. That country, after having been aggrandized by the wrecks of the Russians, united itself to the religion and the throne of Poland in the person of Jagellon, its first Christian prince, the founder of the second Polish race; an union which prolonged, till the reign of Peter the Great's father, the superiority of the Poles over the Russians.

It must also be believed, that, being more in the vicinity of civilization, Poland was the first to reap the benefits of it.

This was the reason that its ascendancy kept the upper hand till towards the fifteenth century. It still maintained the contest, though giving way somewhat, against the autocracy of Ivan the Great; and soon that ascendant manifested itself more remarkably than ever under Stephen Battori, and particularly on the fall of the great dynasty of the Ruriks, which ended with the sixteenth century.

Poland, triumphant, then penetrated even to Moscow; favoured by the distracted condition of Russia, and by causes nearly similar to those which had delivered Kief to her in 1018.

But that supremacy was not of long duration; it was a last gleam shed on this side by the genius of Poland. Soon its torch began to pale its fires before the splendour of the arms of Alexis; and fifty years later, it passed into the hands of Peter the Great, to be extinguished, before the close of the same century, in those of Catherine II.

Thus, Poland had, for a long while, the advantage over Russia; but, notwithstanding its great men, notwithstanding the generous and proud elevation of its national genius, and its daring and heroic valour, the superiority was an accidental one, the greatest part of the causes of which were not inherent; it was not derived from its policy, or from the nature of its government, or from its geographical position. Poland was indebted for it to the intestine quarrels of the Russians, to the subjugation of those rivals by the Tartars; and also to its fortunate union with Lithuania, by which country, far more than by Poland, the calamities of Russia were turned to advantage.

Besides, all the circumstances which were peculiar to Poland were unfavourable to it;—its geographical position, which obliged it to make head in every direction, while Russia, backed by the ice of the north, was unassailable in that quarter;—its Latin religion, which discredited its

dynasty, by humbling it at the feet of the priests, while from the Greek religion the Ruriks derived their divine right; and, lastly, even the long continued scantiness of numbers of the Piast princes of the blood, though, at first, that circumstance had given the superiority to Poland over Russia, which latter country was earlier divided into appanages.

For, among the Russians, the eternal struggle to seize upon power having at first and exclusively been carried on among the princes of the same blood, it was necessarily less fatal there to the established dynasty and the monarchical spirit than it was in Poland, where, in default of a multiplicity of princes of the reigning family, the great and inevitable contest took place between the monarch and the nobles.

To this must be added the pretensions of the latter, which were stimulated either by their contact with that proud German aristocracy, still sovereign in our days; or, perhaps, by the obviously elective origin of their first race of kings; a race which was less respected in consequence of the very circumstance that rendered it more respectable.

Let us particularly remark how the kings, who were vanquished by the nobles as early as 1035, were humiliated before the bishops. They were again vanquished, and lost even their title, in 1380, by the alliance of that warlike aristocracy with the religious aristocracy of the Polish bishops, who wielded the thunder of Rome.

Then followed the partitions of Poland, when, about 1087 and 1130 or 1138, its princes of the blood, having at length multiplied as in Russia, aspired to the possession of appanages. The royal authority was still further enfeebled by this event; the nobles became the only supporters of the princes of the blood in their quarrels; and by this means their importance was so much enhanced

that, towards the close of the twelfth century, (1173) having risen to be the sovereign arbiters of their princes, they deposed Miciezlas, and wished to render the crown elective.

Thus, for one anarchy which preyed on Russia, three anarchies, those of the princes, the nobles, and the priests, were the scourges of Poland. These germs of autocracy, on the one part, and of inextricable confusion on the other, being once established, time, and the chances which it brings, produced their full expansion. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, while in Russia, the power, which had never been out of the hands of the great family of Rurik, was fixed in one of its branches, to be concentrated and increased there, during an additional longevity of two centuries, the dynasty of the Piasts became extinct in Poland (1370.)

It was then that the Polish nobility, so haughty and restless towards their native sovereigns, either chose or accepted a foreign and hostile king. This fact naturally led them to assume a superintending authority over that of the monarch, and to impose on him conditions, to which we might give the name of a charter ; but as this aristocracy had no strength except in assemblies, where a majority decides, the great were constrained to mix with this crowd, and to share with it the power which they had wrested from their kings.

Vainly, in 1385, did the marriage of their princess with Jagellon, unite Lithuania to their empire ; the jealousy of power, the passion for individual independence, kept every thing in a state of internal ferment, and, we may say, of dissolution.

It is thus that, as we trace the march of power in the two empires, we behold it, in the one, contended for by the members of a royal family, but never quitting that family,

till, at length, it there becomes concentrated and formidable ; while, in the other, it slips from the grasp of the reigning dynasty, and is divided between the great, to be finally disseminated among the petty nobles.

In the causes of the superiority which Poland long maintained over Russia, there was, therefore, nothing intrinsic ; its strength was derived much more from the protracted weakness of the Russian empire than from its own inherent vigour ; while in Russia, on the contrary, amidst all its frightful dilacerations by the Tartars, by the Lithuanians, and by itself, there still existed a nucleus, a principle of constitutive energy, in the tendency to concentrate a^l the sources of power in the hands of a dynasty which had a military and immemorial origin, and was the supreme head of its religion.

This principle operated silently ; for ages, in spite of circumstances, it won its way by degrees, turning every thing to the advantage of the Russian throne ; at last, like a colossus that has grown up in darkness, that throne burst formidably forth, to crush all around with its gigantic greatness.

HISTORY OF RUSSIA.



PART. II.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT station shall we now take, to behold at a glance the lengthened series of causes and effects, to catch only the most prominent of them, to discover the principal chain whence the others proceed, and to which all are again linked; in a word, to pass from summit to summit, till we reach the creator of modern Russia; a being so colossal, that it seems as if the history of so many ages were nothing more than the prelude to his illustrious life.

We have touched upon the sacred history of this people, which traces their descent from Japhet, and upon their ancient history, which displays to our view the European portion of the Russian empire as the widely extended theatre of the great conflicts between central Asia and northern Europe; on this vast field of a combat which was at once so long and so obscure, we have beheld Asia several times invading Europe, and Europe, in its turn, thrice gaining the ascendancy over Asia.

Then, in 862, appeared the great Kurik, at the head of his Varangians: he founded the Russian empire. Some coruscations of his genius reach us, and we enter with a less doubtful step on the first period of that history.

At the outset, our attention is fixed upon those Russian Varangians, Scandinavian pirates of the Baltic, and on their local situation with respect to the great Novgorod; whence resulted the voluntary or compulsory union of that northern Slavonic city, the richest and the most populous of cities, with the most valiant of tribes, the Varangians, who occupied its principal outlets.

It is from hence that, like the six thousand Franks of Clovis, we see those Russian Varangians, under the illustrious Oleg, spread themselves abroad without being weakened, and cover all at once, with their arms and with their fame, a large portion of the enormous extent of European Russia.

Such a phenomenon must originate in great causes. The union of the most warlike Norman tribe with the most commercial Slavonian tribe, does not sufficiently account for it; accordingly, we remarked, as a second principle of strength, the concentration of power in the hands of the earlier descendants of Rurik; it was the effect of an unbroken and lineal succession, peculiar to the princes of Russia, which, during the first century of that dynasty, seems to have successively given only a single head to each of its Grand-Princes.

After having noticed this circumstance, we next admired the astonishing series of great men, and the duration of their reigns; Rurik, the founder of the empire; Oleg, who was looked upon as a magician, and whose lance, cut from the forests of the Ladoga, penetrated the gates of Byzantium; Olga, the regent, worthy of a place among so many remarkable warriors, the mother of Sviatoslaf, the Russian Achilles, grandmother of that Vladimir the Great who conquered the Crimea and Livonia, and who, in 988, raised Gothic Russia to its plenitude of power, made it Christian, and laid the basis of its civilization; lastly, Yaroslaf,

its earliest legislator, who supported its enormous weight in the year 1054.

Nevertheless, still surprised at the immense and sudden growth of the empire of the Russian Varangians, we sought new causes for it, in their exclusive attachment to the princes of the Rurik family ; in the guards, animated by such a spirit of devotedness, possessed of a gradation of ranks, and perfectly trained ; in their tactics, their discipline, and their iron weapons, so much superior to those of the Slavonians. We also ascribed it to their religion, which was wholly warlike ; to that passion for conquest which then fired all the Normans ; finally, to the insupportable incursions of the migratory barbarians of the South. The latter obliged Kief to call to its aid the barbarians of the North : that great city of the South preferred the Varangian princes, who invaded to establish themselves, to the oriental nomades, whose sole ambition was to plunder and to destroy.

Who, then, can be astonished that, like all armed protectors, those Normans became masters ? The display of their strength, by their union under a single hereditary chief, rendered more conspicuous the weakness of the Slavonians, divided as they were into small independent tribes, and consequently without a leader and without coherence. Hence, the preponderance of the one, and general submission of the other ; nor should we forget the frequently able policy of the first Russian princes, with respect to the Slavonians, from whom they descended by the female side. It was manifested in their solicitude to protect the Slavonians against the Varangians, and, finally, to blend the two people under one name, that of the victors ; one language, that of the vanquished ; one religion, that of Christ ; and under one standard, of which the rallying word, fraught with attraction, was the spoils of Byzantium.

To these causes of the foundation and of the miraculous aggrandizement of Gothic Russia, we added those of its decline, or its division into appanages: whence, after the death of Vladimir the Great, arose horrible civil wars; the sacking of Kief by the Poles, about 1018; and, at a later period, the singular and fatal custom of heirship from brother to brother, and from uncle to nephew, which was substituted in the place of lineal succession.

Hence, also, notwithstanding the virtues of Vladimir Monomachus, and the policy of Andrew, an increase of appanages and of intestine dissensions. We have beheld unfortunate Russia torn in pieces by these; and all at once, in 1224, while it was in that state, Genghis Khan putting in motion the Asiatic hordes, heaping their waves together, making them overflow from all quarters, and inundating with billows of fire and blood, and for more than two centuries, the disjointed empire of the descendants of Rurik.

CHAPTER II.

THE date of this last great invasion of the north of Europe by Asia marks the commencement of the third period of the Russian history.

In endeavouring to explain this great invasion, we have exhibited the full extent of devastating rage, of conjoint effort, of invariable system, of crafty policy, and of active talent, which in the ardour of a new undertaking, the Tartars displayed, in order to consummate their conquest, and to establish themselves in it on a firm basis.

With respect to this triumph of Asia, while denying to

chance a part of the too extensive influence which indolence or the weakness of our minds universally ascribes to it, we attributed a large share to the faults of the vanquished ; to the impulse given by such a man as Genghis Khan ; and, lastly, to the ascendancy which, in this contest of barbarism, the manners and habits of migratory barbarians must possess over the manners and habits of still barbarous citizens and cultivators.

But we soon had to call attention to that relaxation in the conquerors, which follows great successes, to the negligences of pride, and to intestine dissensions, which sprung from a state of rest,—an unnatural state of existence among barbarians, whose uncultivated minds are ignorant of the art of enjoyment, and can be occupied only by their sordid passions. An abler hand, opening the tents of the Golden Horde, might then, perhaps, have displayed in more vivid colours, a brutal corruption, the natural consequence of a borrowed luxury, rootless and dead, which is the besetting danger of societies that spring from conquest ; an exotic luxury, always barren of benefits, and every where abundantly fertile in injurious effects.

There we might have seen discord, as usual, claiming to enjoy that which union had conquered ; and the Tartars, like voracious troops of hounds, admirable for the ardour with which they pursued and overtook their prey, horrible for the fury with which they contended to tear it from each other ! Fierce discords, however ; the strife of victors and masters, where the sword was the umpire ; and, not, as among the subjugated Russian princes, an abject strife, the strife of slaves, whose chief weapon was calumny, and who were always ready to denounce each other to their cruel rulers : wrangling for a degraded throne, whence they could not move but with plundering, parricidal hands, hands filled with gold, and stained with gore ; which they

dared not ascend without grovelling; nor retain but on their knees, prostrate, and trembling beneath the scimeter of a Tartar, always ready to roll under his feet these servile crowns, and the heads by which they were worn.

What, then, must have been the slaves of such slaves! and, notwithstanding the lapse of ages, what deep traces of such heavy, galling, and long-endured chains, must there not be left behind!

At length, amidst so black and violent a tempest, in which all the branches of the family of Rurik, hurtling against each other, were almost broken, we distinguish the branch of Moscow; at first so flexible, and speedily so strong. It was, on the one side, the perfidious cruelty of its first princes to their kinsfolk, and, on the other, their crafty and persevering servility, to the Tartars, that raised up again the Russian throne.

On this throne of cunning and of blood, however, as on a fertile and well-tilled soil, the branch of Moscow shot up to an infinite height; it saved the empire. It would seem as if the chances of birth, of genius, and of longevity, as if God himself had protected the celebrated successors of those treacherous princes: whether it were that, in the eye of heavenly as of earthly justice, an unjustly acquired possession may be innocently inherited; or that good now and then arises from evil, like life from corruption; or, rather, that all the crime abides in the criminal, who himself bears the curse that attends it, and not in the work, often a useful one, which he leaves behind him.

Here recommenced a period of glory; but, to reach it, through what ensanguined tracts of darkness was it not necessary to grope our way! It is to Peter the Great that history is indebted for the collecting of their melancholy archives. When his genius cast on them a

penetrating glance, this fourth period is said to have consoled him for the third. Yet, in the one as well as in the other, he might have beheld predecessors worthy of him; he might have seen them in the illustrious shades of Alexander Nevsky, of Ivan Kalita, and of Dmitry Donskoi, as well as in those of the great Ivan III., and the ferocious Ivan IV., to the latter of whom he, perhaps, too frequently referred.

Recognizing their genius in his own, he might have marked them advancing, the one* with steel, the other† with gold, in his hand; the third,‡ cowardly like the Roman Octavius, but like him endowed with talents, armed with all the strength which is derived from a patient, machiavehian, persevering policy; and in a word, the whole of them moving invariably onward to the same goal, namely, the concentration of every species of power in their own hands.

He might, also, have witnessed Asia becoming more and more disunited; and the same cause, for the third time, having produced the same effect, the Russians conquering the Tartars, in like manner as the Russians had been subjugated by the Tartars, and the Slavonians by the Russians.

In reviewing these two periods, we have dwelt on the important consequences which sprung from the principle of the concentration of power. We have explained how that alone was able to triumph over an anarchy of princes, as, at the same period, the same principle overcame, in the rest of Europe, an anarchy of feudal lords. Accordingly, to that have we ascribed the re-establishment of the lineal order of succession instead of that between brothers; the restoration of internal tranquillity;

* Dmitry Donskoi.

† Ivan Kalita.

‡ Ivan III.

the conquest of Kasan and Astracan; that of northern Asia; the recovery of portions of the empire from Lithuania and Livonia; lastly, the splendour of the Russian throne, which even then shone with sufficient lustre to attract the attention and the arts of Christianity over these icy expanses, and in spite of the double barrier of religious and political hatred with which it was surrounded by the Lithuanians and Livonians. Already the way was preparing for the reign of Peter the Great; and the great Ivan III., dissevering from barbarian Asia the nascent Russian empire, linked it to civilized Europe, by the ties of an able and high spirited policy, and with the aid of the general terror with which the Turks had inspired it.

But the hero of the second Russian dynasty, that interested admirer of absolute authority, was he not here led astray? Did he ever own to himself that, in its ascendent march, this concentrated power, having disembarrassed itself of all obstacles, went beyond the mark; that, grounding itself on manners impregnated by the Tartar yoke, it became under Ivan IV. an atrocious despotism, destructive of all within its reach, of his nobles, of his own family, and of himself? For, in short, God alone has an ever-present and immediate power over all things; but as, on the contrary, the most levelling despot must always have *grande*s and ministers, the tyrant crushed some only to raise others; he beat down the kinsfolk who were near his throne, only to bring strangers within reach of it; and his dynasty, reduced to a child, was extinguished in its blood, by dint, as it were, of his own precautions. Thus, as often happens, we have seen the success of a principle give birth to its abuse; have seen that branch of the Ruriks fall by the means which originally raised it; and in its fall drag to the ground with it the whole of the trunk.

Rapid as is the glance which we have transiently cast

on the first race, which nearly ends with the reign of Ivan IV. we start, chilled with horror, at sight of that monstrous epoch. The multitude of ferocious beings with which nature has peopled the world is no doubt inexplicable, and yet we dare not impute to her this Muscovite monster. Let us rather accuse of it a second nature, springing into existence amidst gross debaucheries, insolent plots, and shameless assassinations, with which the grantees environed and outraged the childhood of the tyrant: it seems as though they had delighted in training up and exciting against themselves the tiger by whom they were one day to be devoured. In the midst of his sanguinary and irregular march, we perceive, it is true, the impulse of that hereditary policy, which, after having humiliated the princes by means of the Tartars and the higher class of nobility, subjugated that higher class by means of the petty nobles. But the blind rage with which Ivan hunted down the nobles was no longer merely machiavelism; it was the instinct of a wild beast, a hatred of the species, which satisfied wants could not satiate, and which impelled even to useless mischief. They had corroded his youthful heart with suspicion, with apprehension, with that fear, in short, which is the most violent, the most formidable, and the most cruel of all the passions; a furious insanity, a sanguinary frenzy, which time developed, and which was but too obvious when, intoxicated with wine, with blood, and with power, the madman was seen crushing in his subjects the most obsequious of his slaves, and that, too, under the idea that he was defending himself from them.

CHAPTER III.

THE death of Ivan IV. and the downfall of his race, do not, however, terminate the fourth period; we must add to it the times of confusion which succeeded; the disgrace of them ought not to belong to the second dynasty. Being, as they were, the result of the maniac fury of Ivan IV., why should we separate from the epoch in which that monster lived, the fifteen years of horror, corruption, and dissolution, which he left behind him? the long and disgusting decomposition of the carcase of a tyrant!

In vain had he wished to survive himself. Of his three sons, the first alone was capable of reigning, and him he killed with his own hand in a fit of rage; the second, Fœdor, was one of those pliant docile beings, such as are suitable to tyrants, but, at the same time, of such complete incapacity, that Ivan was forced to bequeath him, together with the autocratic sway of which he was so jealous, to a council of those nobles, the whole of whom he had been unable to crush.

Though his expectation was deceived as to the tyrant, it was not so with respect to the tyranny; those nobles entered into a contention for the power,—a power which was so completely made up of violence and despotism, that the most crafty and wicked of them all was the only person who was capable of seizing and retaining it. Boris Godunof was that ambitious being. An Eastern custom, which authorised the unequal marriage of princes with their subjects, had made this Boris, who was the descendant of a Calmuck, the brother-in-law of Fœdor, the last sovereign

of the race of Rurik ; an infirm tzar, who could not live, and whose brother and sole heir, the unfortunate Dmitry, was but a child.

Thus, the crown of Rurik came within reach of the son of a Tartar. He insulated it ; and when, by calumny, by banishment, and by poison, the traitor had made room for himself, he stood so near the throne, that, in order to ascend it, he had only one more crime to commit. It was then that the hapless Dmitry, who lived in exile at Uglitch, was there assassinated, and that the whole city, the witness and the denouncer of the murder, was destroyed, as if it had been an accomplice in the crime.

The barbarian could at once fully consummate a crime, and wait for the results of it. He suffered the weak Fœdor to live ; and, reigning gloriously in his name, he purposed to obtain from the love and admiration of the people, the fruit of his criminal actions. In the same year in which he killed the sole heir to the throne, he availed himself of the sordid ambition of a Greek bishop, who was become the slave of the Turks, to purchase from him the right of establishing in Russia a patriarch, who was destined, at a future period, to repay him diadem for diadem.

In the mean while, the grandees whom he could not deceive were either driven away or crushed by terror ; the petty nobles were gained over by chaining down the serfs to the soil ;* the inhabitants of the cities, by a continued affectation of popularity ; criminals, by indulgence ; and the whole nation, by the splendour of an able administration and policy. Smolensk was fortified ; Archangel built ; the Tartars, defeated for the last time under the walls of Moscow, were chased back into their deserts, and were

* In 1492 or 1593. See Divof, Tatishchev, the edict of 1597.

confined within them by strong places constructed around their haunts. Other fortresses arose, under the shadow of the Caucasus; Siberia was finally reconquered by the Russian manners, arts, and arms. The Swedes were driven into Narva; and a diplomatic intercourse was opened with the European powers. Lithuania, and even Poland itself, is said to have momentarily consented to submit to the sceptre which was swayed by Godunof. The spirit of sectarianism alone appears to have dissolved this important union, which was then voluntary, but which, two centuries later, was to be the work of compulsion.

It was at the moment that the glory of Boris shone in its brightest lustre, that, after seven hundred and thirty-six years of existence, the dynasty of Rurik became extinct, in the person of Fœdor, its fifty-second sovereign, and with the sixteenth century, (1598.) Other branches still existed, but the tyranny of Ivan had pressed heavily upon all his race. So completely had he insulated the throne by terror, that none but the minister of that terror dared to aspire to it.

The deputies of Russia were assembled; let us listen to their annalists. “The election begins; the people look up to the nobles, the nobles to the grandees, the grandees to the patriarch; he speaks, he names Boris; and instantaneously, and as one man, all re-echo that formidable name!”

Godunof, on his side, grasped with so firm a hand all the links of power, that he felt a pleasure in obstinately refusing a sceptre which he so ardently desired. The grandees, the people, besieged him with their supplications; he escaped from them, he took refuge in a monastery, where the throng of slaves again fruitlessly surrounded him. This political farce, which others of his kind have hardly been able to play for a few minutes, he ventured to

keep up for more than a month. He knew that, from the seclusion of the cell to which he had hypocritically retired, a single breath of his would suffice to impel, as he pleased, all the waves of that immense multitude.

In fact, the people, the nobles, the priests, all obeyed the impulse; he appeared to direct, by unseen threads, every movement of those thousands of individuals; always invisible, he made them come, or go, speak, or be silent, with one accord, and as he willed, as though they had been a single body of which he was the soul.

It was thus that, to the walls of the monastery which held him, the impostor attracted this herd of slaves, repelled them, drew them on again, without fearing to disgust them, and did not yield, at length, till after having for six weeks kept all Russia in suspense, on its knees, in tears, its arms raised to him, and with clasped hands holding forth to him the relics of the saints, the image of the Redeemer, to whom it compared him, and that antique crown, which during fourteen years he had coveted, and towards which he had won his way by so many crimes.

The usurpation of Boris began, or rather it continued: it sustained itself by dint of prodigalities, of idle shows, and of those striking effects of charlatanism which have such influence over the minds of a rude and ignorant people. The satisfied tyrant at first imagined that he might stop in the career of crime. He sought to enlighten his subjects with European knowledge; but this the priests opposed. His usurped power was devoid of independence; emanating from evil, it was strong only for purposes of evil. The consciousness of his crimes appalled him; he hoped to quiet his alarms by new acts of violence, which redoubled these alarms, and he completed the demoralization of every thing by the dread which he felt, and that which he inspired.

Like so many other usurpers, he, who was lately the equal of the grandees, now became mistrustful and fearful of them ; in their ruin he saw his own safety : their riches would enable him to win the petty nobles, whose pretensions could never come in competition with his own ; and also the love of the people, which has been sought by the majority of tyrants, and which has but too often been obtained by them. Among his victims may be remarked the Romanofs. Being allied to the Ruriks, they were the family which gave most uneasiness to the usurper. The head of this eminent house was preserved from the punishment of the axe only by that of the tonsure. Ere long, we shall see this monk, after having risen to the primacy, rendering himself illustrious by his patriotic devotedness, and his virtues meriting for his son the sceptre of an empire which those virtues had preserved from foreign domination.

All was, in the meantime, brutified by fear : in the midst of banquets, in the most peaceable ceremonies, the proudest grandees of the empire, the descendants of so many princes, on the least sign being given by this Tartar, were seen to rush, like executioners, upon any one of their number whom he pointed out as his enemy. Slavery was carried to its highest pitch of intensity by this usurper ; with that slavery which Ivan employed to crush the Princes and the Russian Republic, which Ivan IV. extended to the higher class of nobility and the cities, Boris now fettered the country, by binding down the peasantry to the soil.*

From that moment, despotism was omnipresent ; every village, every house, had its despotism equally with the throne, on which, in their turn, all these despotisms were dependent. The Russian nation was no longer any thing

* See Divof;—the edicts subsequent to that of 1593;—Tatischev.

but a hierarchy of slaves. Thenceforth, there was no intercourse; none of those public meetings in which the youthful part of society at least orally acquired knowledge; no compacts to protect the weak, no asylum for them. Russia became sad and sullen: the minstrels, who had been wont to traverse the country, now disappeared; their songs of war and the chase, and even of love, were heard no longer. It is only in the chronicles of the time that we discover the traces of those perished manners, those mellifluous songs: on meeting with them, the national historian is surprised, is affected; he mournfully exclaims, "that, in these recollections, the Russia of the present day, mute and enslaved, finds but the image of an object which no longer exists, the echo of a voice which no longer vibrates on her ear."

All these usurpations of Boris were not slow in producing the scourges which are their inseparable concomitants; those scourges caused the tyrant himself to die of grief on his tottering throne. He was doomed, in the first place, to witness the calamitous emigration of the peasants, in order to preserve their freedom among the Cossacks; then a horrible famine; and shortly after, an atrocious *jacquerie*, victorious at first, but ultimately vanquished. These were the fruits of his criminal attack upon the liberties of the people. As to the murder of Dmitry, he imagined that he beheld the shade of his victim rising from the tomb, to take vengeance upon him. In conclusion, he left Russia depopulated, exhausted, laid open on every side, and a prey to all the horrors which arise from the breaking up of society. What crimes, what torments, what woes, to procure a six years' reign upon a throne which, two months after his decease, was to overwhelm his son in its fall!

CHAPTER IV.

BUT why plunge into, and be lost in, the details of such numerous abominations? In one word, the interval which divides the only two races that have reigned over Russia, was like a gulph opened in the midst of that empire; an abyss of mire and of blood, in which the nation was on the point of being wholly swallowed up.

This period of fifteen years includes every thing that is most revolting, in meanness, in treachery, in foreign and civil war, and in the war of the poor against the rich. It would seem as if the genius of evil, foreseeing the contraction of his empire by the days of civilization which were approaching, had hastened to crowd into this brief space every calamity and every crime.

The most flagrant of all illegitimacies, that of despotism, opened the door to every other. After a parricidal usurper,—a monk under the name of Dmitry, a grandee of the family of Rurik, foreign and hostile princes, peasants, slaves even, always under the name of the unfortunate Dmitry, the last of the Ruriks, aspired to ascend the throne; they approached it; several of them reached it, and ensanguined and sullied it for a few moments. Confusion was at its height. The atrocious despotism of Ivan IV. seemed to have destroyed all the ties of country, of family, of religion, particularly among the grandees; those on whom his tyranny had weighed most heavily: the major part of them, it is true, the creatures and playthings of his caprice, upstarts, without bounds or measure,

without habitudes, or prepossessions, in short, without any traditionary feeling connected with their new situation.

Some of them signed, in Moscow itself, the subjection of their country to Poland; a throng of others beset the tent of the Polish prince, not to combat that enemy of their native land, but shamelessly to require from him, as the reward of their treason, the spoils of their compatriots who had remained faithful. The Swedes were masters of Novgorod, the Poles of Moscow: the most frightful disorder reigned uncontrolled.

But, amidst this total subversion, religion alone stood erect and immutable; in the enemies of the country it recognized its own; its priests could not, in this instance, mistake their way: their faith was unbroken, their duty evident, their interest direct. In this universal conflagration, it seemed as though the religious spirit which animated them were like an atmosphere, an element apart, admitting of no intermixture; in which they lived, and out of which they felt that they could not exist: all was corrupted, all dropped down around this nucleus, which singly, exposed as it was, remained entire and incorruptible.

This epoch, so disgraceful to all classes of the nation, is that of the brightest glory of the Russian clergy. While all others, scarcely escaped from the fetters of the East, were bending to receive those of the West, they alone, by heroes and by martyrs, resisted domestic treason and foreign invasion; thus proving, that national independence, that the spirit of party, and even of caste, may give way, but that the spirit of a sect never can.

Russia, meanwhile, was so degraded, that her crown was despised: in the eyes of the Kings of Sweden and Poland, she was no longer an empire, but a prey of which they wished to seize only the fragments.

At length, in 1612, affairs had reached that point at which nations feel that their only hope of safety is in themselves; in which excess of adversity displays men as they are; and necessity becomes the dispenser of ranks. A hundred fold more calamities existed than were required to produce great men. Accordingly they arose in every class of the nation: Minin among the people; Pojorsky among the nobles. The clergy continued to produce their portion, among them was Romanoff: twice in Polish chains a martyr for his country, during nine years this primate inflexibly asserted its independence; and grateful Russia elevated his son as its emperor (1613.)

This election marks the end of the fourth period, and of the fifteen years of illegitimacy, or interregnum, which began with Boris. While casting a last glance on this part of our subject, we may remark that this naturalized Tartar did not consider his usurpation as legalized, till he had procured himself to be elected by the States-general; that, shortly after, Chuisky, a prince descended from Rurik, but of a different branch from that of Moscow, ascended and fell from the throne, without his origin having contributed to his rise, or been able to retard his fall; and even without his having urged it as a plea for seizing or retaining the crown: he did not so much as repel the title of usurper, with which he was overwhelmed, in consequence of his not having been elected by the nation. So utterly was he despised, that death was not deigned to be inflicted on him. Into such singular dis-esteem all these branches of the Ruriks had fallen; while, on the contrary, the first impostor, because he claimed to belong to that of Moscow, was instantly surrounded by whole armies of dupes.

And, in reality, it seems that the origin of all the other branches was already forgotten; either through the jea-

lousy of the Tzars of Moscow, seconded by that which a petty nobility felt against a nobility of princes; or from the effect of that levelling despotism which had long since obliterated every other distinction than that of favour; or, lastly, that family names not being then in use, the collateral descent was unperceived, or was held in little estimation.

But, before we enter upon the fifth period of the Russian history, we must remark, that its first prince was not elected till after long and stormy debates in a national assembly, composed not only of boyards, but of boyard-followers, and of the deputies of the traders and citizens of the towns.

The oath which was then dictated bears the stamp of this: Mikhail Romanoff swore, in the presence of the boyards, "that he would protect religion; that he would pardon and forget all that had been done to his father; that he would make no laws, nor alter the old; and that, in important causes, he would decide nothing by himself, but that every thing should be tried according to the laws, and the usual form of trial; that he would not at his own pleasure make either war or peace with his neighbours; and that, to avoid all suits with individuals, he would resign his estates to his family, or incorporate them with the crown domains." Strahlenberg adds, that Alexis, on his accession, swore to observe the same conditions.

These forms, however futile they may have been, are remarkable; not because they render sacred a right which stands in no need of them, but because they recall it to mind; and also because they prove that, even on the soil most favourable to despotism, a charter which should give absolute power to a monarch would appear such a gross absurdity, that we know not that an instance of the kind ever existed.

Thus, the period of interregnum, of illegitimacy, which sullied the Russian history, terminated, in Mikhail Romanoff, by an election, as it commenced in Boris; but with this difference, that the one could not legalize a previous usurpation, while the second, which preceded the accession of Mikhail Romanoff, was free and legitimate.

But how is this? amidst such a vast disorganization, was a mere election sufficient? Was not the political existence of Russia itself recently in doubt? A terrific crisis, resembling those violent diseases which threaten with certain destruction the most robust bodies! And yet tranquillity re-appeared. It seems as though the dreadful fever of fifteen years had evaporated all the pestilential miasma. For if all the before-mentioned causes of the sudden transition from evil to good are still considered as unsatisfactory; there is nothing left to allege, except that, doubtless, for Russia, the source of its woes was exhausted, the most painful part of its career was run: and that, as in the elliptical course in which the world incessantly moves, nothing pauses or retrogrades; so Russia naturally passed on to a milder season, and entered without effort upon a new path, in which all that had formerly unsettled it could reach it no more.

In fact, the tempest was at its height, and all was suddenly calmed by the election of a mere youth; the throng of pretenders melted away before this chosen of the nation; the King of Sweden, the King of Poland himself, was compelled to acknowledge him. New false Dmitrys started up in vain; they fell despised before him: so completely was this event brought about by the state of things, this natural unravelling, and the fulness of time!

CHAPTER V.

BEHOLD, then, the dynasty of barbaric origin, of divine right, of the right of conquest, the inheritor of Tartar manners and violence; behold it replaced by a dynasty which a nation, purified by misfortune, chose freely from among all that it possessed that was most patriotic, most virtuous, most sacred, and bearing the least resemblance to the tyrants who were recently its oppressors.

In fact, the source of this dynasty was pure. It was from the very heart of the nation that it sprung. What imports it, that an obscure Prussian, who settled in Russia about 1350, was the head of this family, and that thus the primary root of this second dynasty was foreign? For two centuries had it not been covered by Russian earth and native laurels?

In Mikhail Romanoff, Russia chose a name which was lustrous with two hundred and fifty years of conspicuousness; the descendant of the Cleremetefs, a family equally beloved and illustrious; the son of that martyr of the country, who again endured for it heroic sufferings; lastly, one allied to the Ruriks,† who is said to have been designated as his successor by the last Prince of that dynasty. The persecution of the Romanoffs by the regicide Boris gave weight to this popular report: the hatred of the usurper pointed out this family to the love of the nation.

What could be more natural than that, disgusted with

• Navikof, Levesque, Leclerc, &c.

† Nephew of the mother of Fœdor, the last tzar of that dynasty.

tyranny, that nation should, in Mikhail, have chosen one of its victims ; that, weary of all kinds of war, it should have proclaimed the son of a minister of peace ; that in a liberating revolution, for which it was indebted particularly to its priests, it should be the offspring of a priest, the pupil of a convent, whom it selected for its sovereign ! For here, every thing was in unison ; the interests of various classes, the love of the people, patriotism, the want of repose, and the hope of a mild and pacific reign.

Another great citizen, the vaiwode Pojarsky, rose, it is true, to an equal elevation with the primate Romanoff : there might have been room for hesitating which of them deserved the preference ; but it was the general himself who elected the son of the primate, either from disinterestedness, or from that deference which the Russians then felt for those families which had long been more conspicuous than others, or from respect for the character of the martyr, and docility to the influence of the priests, who must, of course, prefer the son of a priest, in the hope of reigning through his father.

The virtues of the primate Romanoff were, therefore, the deeply-seated roots of that dynasty ; they penetrated into the hearts of the Russians ; they bore their fruit ; and, as it often happens, the solid cause of entering upon possession became that of its duration.

In reality, either from ability, or from the force of circumstances, or from the influence of origin, the first descendants of that victim of tyranny, that martyr of independence,* seem to have inherited the virtues of their ancestor. Their government, down to the period of Peter the Great, had somewhat of strength, of virtue, and of that mildness which is natural to strength.

Revolts again broke out ; they were suppressed ; and,

* See Leclerc, page 73.

for the first time, during a long series of years, the justice of the prince was not an act of vengeance.

European military officers were invited ; but the great effort which they directed against Smolensk was frustrated by the national jealousy, and Mikhail was obliged to renounce the glory of arms.

Moderation, a love of peace, resignation even, and yet the creation of a more regular army, which restored internal tranquillity, and prepared the way for indispensable conquests ; this is the share of merit which, in the establishment of this dynasty, must be assigned to the first of its princes !*

That of the second is, to have been a formidable warrior, who recovered from Poland, Smolensk, Kief, and the major part of the provinces which had been wrested from Russia, and endeavoured to give more regularity to his army : to have been a legislator, who strove to ameliorate his codes ; a ruler, who knew how to discover and repair his faults ; who invited foreign arts, founded manufactures, caused to be worked the copper and iron mines, which are the riches of the Russian soil, and constructed the two first Russian vessels, the sight of which inspired the genius of his third son, Peter the Great. To have been also a moderate conqueror, who manifested respect for his nation, by calling his States-general to decide on great questions of public interest ; and, lastly, to have been a clement and religious prince. We see him faithful to his pledged word, even when given to the robber Stencko Razin, a revolted Cossack, the devastator of the south-east of Russia, the Pugatchef of that age

* Mikhail, from 1613 to 1645. Alexei, his son, from 1645 to 1676. Fædor, the eldest son of Alexei, from 1676 to 1682. Sophia, Ivan, and Peter, from 1682 to 1699. Peter and Ivan till 1696. Peter alone, till 1725.

That flagitious ruffian, who wished to give to his enormities the colour of a war in behalf of one class, proclaimed himself the enemy of the nobles, and the restorer of the *liberty* of the people; a strange word on this soil of slavery and from such lips; but, notwithstanding, less strange from those of the nomadic tribes who then rallied round Russia, prompted by love of that same liberty for which their ancestors had expatriated themselves of old.

In fact, those of the Ukraine, who had revolted against Polish oppression and intolerance, offered themselves to Russia, along with Kief, their recent conquest. But this resumption from Poland would be the signal of a great war; and it was then that the Tzar submitted to the principal men of his empire the decision upon the subject.

At the same time that prince lost no opportunity of connecting himself* with the European courts. He assisted Charles II. during that monarch's exile, and sent to compliment him on his restoration to the English throne; he, however, declined a treaty disadvantageous to the Russian commerce, which was proposed to him by the ambassador Carlisle.†

The sufferings inflicted on the celebrated Nikon by the ever-furious Novgorodians, his elevation to the patriarchate, his innovations, and his writings, likewise illustrate this reign, which, however, was tarnished by his disgrace.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the revolts of the people, which had become perceptibly more frequent since the interregnum, the authority of this second race was already established. Its ascensive impulse was even so powerfully given, that Fœdor, the son and successor of Alexis, thoroughly weak as he was in body and mind, was able to

* In conformity with the oath which he took upon his accession.—
See Manstein.

† See Spada, Russian Ephemerides.

wrest the Zaporovians from Turkey, by a three years' war, and from the Russian nobles their vain pretensions, by burning all their title-deeds.

But in the uncontested and rapidly increasing power and glory of this second race, as in all that relates to the affairs of mankind, fortune had a considerable share. Behold, indeed, as at the time of the foundation of the empire by the Ruriks, and of its restoration by the princes of Moscow, behold, again reappearing and brilliantly shining, that star which presides over the establishment of great dynasties. Exhausted and mutilated, Russia required a long pacific reign, not for the purpose of enjoying peace, but of preparing to reconquer its ancient frontiers under a long reign, entirely warlike: well, then! not only were the first two Romanoffs born with dispositions conformable to these wants, but the one reigned thirty-three years, and the other thirty-one; and all the necessary conditions, of mildness, patience, and prudence, in the one; of talent and of boldness in the other; and of longevity, moderation, and of seasonableness in both; were exactly fulfilled. Fate seems even not to have been careless of minor points; he who was to be pacific, had a suitable exterior; the second, who was destined for a conqueror, was of a colossal, commanding, and already victorious stature.

Nay, more, of three sons whom the warrior left, one alone was a great man, but he was the youngest of the three. Now, what was the result? It happened, that, during the childhood of the latter, the first, who was an ordinary prince, died after a short reign: it happened, too, that the second was so utterly incapable of reigning, that his subjects set no value on him; and, finally, it happened, that his two elder brothers died without male heirs: so that, amidst these three princes, of such different ages, the crown, passing rapidly through the first two, fell, as of

itself, into the hands of him who was most remote from and most worthy of it.

Peter the Great wore it during forty-three years.* Thus destiny arranged in such a manner the spirit and the duration of the first six reigns of the second race, as if it had delighted in preparing, raising, preserving, and augmenting the glory of the race.

* From 1682 to 1725.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

THE grandees themselves refused the crown to the imbecility of Ivan, the second son of Alexis; they gave it to Peter I.* his brother by a second marriage.

It is not, however, by so gentle a descent that fate leads great men; the childhood of Peter was claimed by misfortune. Aided by a revolt of the Strelitz, Sophia, his sister, but by the same mother as Ivan, caused to be restored to Ivan a sceptre, which she hoped to wield in conjunction with her favourite Golitzin, during the perpetual infancy of the weak-minded prince.

Peter was only ten years old, and already he seemed to be lost to Russia: sedition in all its fury surrounded him. In the first instance, his mother could save him only by carrying him sixty versts in her arms, and the insurgent Strelitz closely tracked her footsteps.† She could hear their yells and the tread of their approaching feet; at length, they rushed after her into the Convent of the Trinity. The unfortunate and dismayed mother took refuge at the foot of

* See, for the accession of Peter the Great, Stcherbatof, Muller, Pheophanes. The learned notes of M. M. Depping, and Levesque, whom Leclerc controverts, but without citing sufficient authorities.

† Stœhlin.

the altar, on which she placed her son; but the sanctuary was violated, and the victim was seen by two strelitz: doubly sacrilegious, one of them seized the prince, and raised his sword, and that head which contained the seeds of the Russian glory was on the point of falling, when a momentary hesitation produced an entire change. Horsemen appeared, they hurried forward, and Peter was once more saved.

In the mean while, the boyards, by whom he was elected, had been proscribed; his relatives by his mother's side had been murdered; the strelitz alone seemed to have conceived and executed every thing. But Sophia, whom they had appointed regent, had reaped the fruits of the murder; she encircled herself with the murderers; she recompensed them with the property of their victims.

These dangerous allies, however, did not resign into her hands their revolutionary power. After having gratified their own class by destroying the indentures which bound the hired slaves to the nobility, they placed inspectors about Sophia: like all those who give thrones, these janissaries wished the possessor to reign for them alone.

This disgrace was lasting: for three years, in the ambitious Sophia, as it has happened in so many other ambitious characters, the most lordly and arrogant of all passions, proved itself to be the most servile. At length, she shook off this infamous yoke, avenged herself on the most daring, and pardoned the others, either in consideration of their numbers, or of their being old accomplices.

The Tartars were now repulsed, the Turks were repressed; and, as the reward of the latter effort, which was made in conjunction with Poland and Austria, Poland renounced the Lithuanian provinces which had been reconquered by Alexis.

But the capacity thus displayed by Sophia and her mi-

nisters, did not legitimate their usurpation over the rising genius which they vainly sought to stifle : that indestructible principle, that insurmountable strength, the living deity in man, against which human efforts are unavailing ! Accordingly, they succeeded only in impairing the health and corrupting the morals of the youthful Tzar ; it was not more in their power to deprive him of his lofty nature, than it would have been possible for them to have given it to him.

In the beginning of 1684, they led to the altar the weak-minded Ivan, in the hope that the birth of a heir to the throne would for ever exclude his brother from it, and prolong their regency for an indefinite period.

At the same time, the boyhood of Peter was banished to a village. General Menesius,* a learned Scotchman, to whom Alexis had entrusted his education, refused to betray him, and was, therefore, driven from his charge. The first impressions on the mind of Peter were allowed to be received from coarse and sordid amusements ; and next, from foreigners, who were repulsed by the jealousy of the boyards, hated by the superstition of the people, and despised by the general ignorance.

But Providence attains its ends even by means of our own blindness. Kept at a distance from the throne, Peter escaped the influence of that atmosphere of effeminacy and flattery by which it is environed ; the hatred with which he was inspired against the destroyers of his family, increased the energy of his character. He knew that he must conquer his place upon the throne, which was held by an able and ambitious sister, and encircled by a barbarous soldiery ; thenceforth, his childhood had that which ripened age too often wants, it had an aim in view, of which his genius, already bold and persevering, had a

* See Basaville.

thorough comprehension. Surrounded by adventurers of daring spirits, who had come from far to try their fortune, his powers were rapidly unfolded.

One of them, Lefort, who doubtless perceived in this young barbarian the traces of civilization, which had perhaps been left there by his first tutor,* gave him an idea of the sciences and arts of Europe, and particularly of the military art.

It is said that, on being made sensible of the barbarism of his countrymen, tears of generous sorrow started into the eyes of this youth; it was like presenting a sword to the sight of a new Achilles. But Peter was much more. That arms should have been his toys, and military exercises his sports, excites but little astonishment; but that which deserves admiration is, that, at a time of life when it is deemed an insupportable yoke, he should have comprehended the importance of discipline; that he should have submitted to it with the same eagerness that men display to elude it; that he should have persevered in it, at the most mutable period of existence; and lastly, that he should have given an example at an age in which individuals are hardly capable of following one.

Fifty young Russians were placed about his person; not, as of old, when the flower of the Egyptian youth were placed near Sesostris, or the sons of the Persian grandees near the youthful Cyrus; but merely as companions in debauchery, his *amusers*, for so they were denominated by the rusticity of that period.

Peter accepted them as such; for his body, equally robust with his mind, was sufficient for every thing, for evil as well as for good; but, at the same time, with that admirable discernment which marks great men, and that power which they exercise over themselves and others, he

* See Bassville, Mem. of Lefort.

rushed forth, by the only outlet that was left open, from the barbarism which enveloped him, and drew after him all who were about his person.

The village in which he was retained became an European military school; his companions became pupils in the art of war, exercised, armed, and dressed like the foreigners, whose superiority he had discovered.

The youthful Tzar wished to pass through all the ranks, and perform their most painful duties: he was a drummer, then a soldier, then an officer, and this was not a mere mockery; in a barrow, made with his own hands, he wheeled the earth of the entrenchments which he constructed, and, like the meanest soldier, he himself took his turn to keep guard in them.

He was desirous to render that career honourable, and to leave deeply imprinted in it the footsteps of a sovereign, to serve as a guide to those whom he called to follow him; then, giving another great example, in the intervals of his service, he applied himself to the study of the German language and of mathematics; resting from the toils of the body by those of the mind, and thus forming himself for the life of a hero.

Already, by his persevering study of the principles of the science of war, Peter had acquired a facility of learning; for, as the arts are connected with each other by some one link, and all by a general method, the profound study of one of them led him on to the others; he acquired more and more a taste for civilization, and a distaste for Muscovite barbarism, and thus his future greatness was to be the offspring of his misfortunes.

Sophia and her strelitz, meanwhile, smiled at these war-like sports. In this series of efforts, always directed towards the same point, she did not perceive the essays of a nascent genius. In these fifty boys, formed into a com-

pany, bearing the name of *pleasure company*, she saw not the germ of those regular corps, which were soon to assist in hurling her from the throne, and destroying her satellites.

What cared she for a boy of fifteen, who, alone, was growing up between her and the goal which her sanguinary ambition even now touched! But already Peter dared to resist her; his strength disdained dissimulation; he openly declared against the accomplices of his sister; to the criminal pregnancy of his brother's wife he opposed his own marriage, and, in a very short time, the hope of a more legitimate heir.

Sophia began to be astonished that so youthful a heart was neither to be won over nor intimidated. In a very short time the age of Peter (1689), for he was seventeen, and his genius, which outran his years, were a source of embarrassment to her. At length, she dared to wear the ensigns of sovereign power; Peter was indignant at this; and his giving vent to his anger was the signal of his ruin. The victim, the hour, the place, all was marked out, and six hundred strelitz marched with all the precipitation of guilt, under cover of the night.

But it was not in a despotic court, the favourite abode of intrigue, and in a government where power, absolute even to theocracy, was concentrated in a single family, that the two-fold potency of legitimacy and of genius could want partisans; this was proved by the humbled state of that haughty princess, when she learned that Peter, timely warned, had taken refuge in the Convent of the Trinity; that he had summoned round him his faithful subjects; that the patriarch himself had abandoned the usurper and proclaimed her guilty; and that her scheme was thus rendered abortive. Disarmed of her plot, the ambitious regent sank powerless before a youth; and genius assumed the station which she had recently occupied (1689).

CHAPTER II.

THE eighteenth century was now about to commence, and with it the period of Russian civilization at length arrived. Since the tenth century, the first race, attracted by the benefits which the sun and civilization confer, had followed the general tendency of the northern barbarians towards those two lights which warm and illuminate the world. But its intestine dissensions, and the Tartars, had violently turned it aside from that direction. Accordingly, the master-idea of that dynasty was the concentration of its power, and its liberation from the Asiatic yoke.

Under the first race, therefore, Russia was turned wholly towards the East; under the second, we see it almost exclusively turned back towards the West.

Every thing drew it thither, peace as well as war; and also the Germanic origin of the new princes: Asia was now done with: besides, the original propension towards heat and light, which is so natural to the men of the frozen shades of the north, but which had at first been wrested aside by a great accident, now insensibly resumed its empire.*

Those European lights, hitherto perhaps too feeble to penetrate to such a distance, and through such thick darkness, now grew stronger, and from day to day shed around an increasing radiance.

Besides, in the interval which separated the two Russian dynasties, had not Europe itself advanced to the very heart of Russia? To resist it was a matter of necessity;

* Weydemeyer, Malte-Brun, &c. &c. See, subsequent to the conquest of Astracan, the constant migrations of the Great Russians along the Volga and the Kama.

and, for this purpose, it was no less necessary to turn entirely towards the West, and fix all the attention there; and, since war was there an art, it was also indispensable to obtain instruction, and to become civilized, in order to combat with equal arms.

On the other hand, the encampment of the Turks in Constantinople, compelled one part of Christendom to have recourse to Russia for aid: thus, in whatever manner, whether hostile or otherwise, Europe displayed its radiance to it, Russia, henceforth obliged to make war or to negotiate by the light of that radiance, must necessarily be illuminated by it. Asia, therefore, was no longer any thing more than a secondary concern in its policy; and as it had been Asiatic under the Ruriks, it tended to become European under the Romanoffs.

Till the time of Peter the Great, however, the princes of his dynasty may be said to have lived only upon loans made from civilization, and not to have been able to naturalize it; their efforts were indecisive, inexpert, incapable; they were made without a plan, without concentration; they were rendered abortive by an ignorant, obstinate, superstitious, national pride, which yielded with regret to the necessity of borrowing from Europe, not the germ of its arts, but merely some of their results. Those timid experiments in industry and commerce, crushed and stifled, were lost amidst that rude and boorish people. In a country deeply impressed by the stagnant manners of Asia, the power of habit contended victoriously against that of novelty.

Some corps of foreign cavalry had, it is true, been organized;* but they existed, dispersed and despised, in an

* In the Russian army of Alexis, before Smolensk, there were seven regiments organized in the European manner.

army without pay, without an uniform, and without regularity; and this commencement of organization under Alexis disappeared under his successor. This was the reason why the Romanoffs had not been able to preserve the conquests which were made from the Tartars by the two Ivans. It was only by availing himself of highly favourable circumstances, that Alexis triumphed over the Poles. As to the Swedes, a fruitless effort had inspired a disgust of contending against them.

Since the sixteenth century, the empire, therefore, had made no acquisitions but on the side of Siberia; elsewhere, in that direction, the course of the Oural nearly marked its frontier: Astracan on the one side, Kief on the other, and the Cossacks, whom sameness of religion, the intolerance of the Poles, and their hatred of the Turks, had recently given to Russia, were her dubious and last possessions towards the south; to the west, were the Dnieper and the Dwina; to the north, Pskof and Novgorod, ruined by desolation and war; then, the White Sea: an empire, in short, wholly of land, held as a prisoner, without any other outlet than a wild, repulsive, desert sea, which, during three-fourths of the year, was itself enchained and immovable.

But one bold stroke placed a youthful barbarian of eighteen at the head of this barbarous nation, and all was soon irrevocably changed. An historical miracle! To work upon, to enlighten, to enlarge, in a word, to transform entirely, and in spite of itself, that whole moral and physical nature, one single mind, circumscribed within the narrow limits of a man, was found to suffice.

That young prince sprang from a family of pure morals, as is obvious, not only from the colossal vigour of his frame, but also of his mind. Without selfishness in the most selfish of passions, his ample heart included within its

own bounds an entire national ambition ; one of those great and noble ambitions, devoid of all reference to self,—the glory of twenty millions of men !

To this greatness of mind he added a soundness of judgment, a correctness of ideas, in a word, that good sense which may be called a sixth sense, and which alone can give to all the mental and corporeal powers a useful, and, consequently, a truly great direction.

Add to all this, the constitution of a great man ; that harmony of intellectual and physical vigour and activity which is essential to strong and vivid conception, to tenacious pursuit, and to the accomplishment of vast projects. Lastly, that stature of imaginary heroes which real heroes so seldom possess, either because human nature cannot be so perfect, and that it exhausts itself in giving large proportions either to body or to mind ; or, because the two advantages are incompatible with each other, men, gifted with such personal qualities, being very seldom solicitous to become distinguished as men of illustrious deeds.

CHAPTER III.

TILL he reached the age of twenty, the study of some of the European languages, that of the military art, and the care of forming, according to the principles of that art, an army of twenty thousand men, occupied his early youth.

Murderous exercises, and petty but sanguinary wars, manifested at once the ardour of the prince, the rudeness of the times, and that oriental contempt of the life of man,

which is the worthy result of the servile brutishness of the subject, the despotism of the master, and the exclusion of females from society.*

At the same time, the Russian Cossacks pushed their conquests in Siberia as far as the frontiers of China. The two empires, on approaching each other for the first time, came into collision, till the treaty of 1692 settled the limits which were to be common to them.

It was then that,† in an European sloop, which had been forgotten among other ruins, and the use of which he caused to be explained to him, the Tzar perceived the real instrument for civilizing his empire. From that moment this prince, whose early childhood, in consequence of his having been frightened by the sudden noise of a large cascade,‡ had contracted a dread of water which he was long before he could conquer, became passionately fond of that element; he attached himself to the art of navigation; a river, a lake, the White Sea, which was then the only Russian sea, successively served to give him a thorough knowledge of that art.

War was at length begun;‡ it was the Turks whom Peter attacked. He was only twenty-three, and already, in the siege of Asoph, the paramount idea of his whole life became visible. He wished to civilize his people in beginning with the science of war by sea and land. That art, which thenceforth included all the other arts, would open the way for them into Russia, and protect them there. By that science the Tzar was to conquer for his empire that element, which, in his eyes, was the greatest *civilizer* of the world, because it is the most favourable to the intercourse of nations with each other.

His attempt upon Asoph, his failure, when his impa-

* See Bassville, *Life of Lafort*, &c. &c.

† 1612.

‡ Manstein.

tience led him to deviate from right principles, and his success when, after a two years' siege, he acted upon them, confirmed him in his resolution. Twelve ships of war, constructed on the Voroneje,* and sent down the Don, ensured this conquest. Since the barks of the Varangians, it was the first time that these streams had beheld a Russian sail.

But ignorant and savage Asia lay stretched along the Black Sea, even to Byzantium, between Russia and the south of Europe. It was not, therefore, through this sea, which was become barbarous, that the efforts of Peter could open himself a passage to European knowledge.

But towards the north-west another sea, that whence, in the ninth century, came the first Russian founders of the empire, was within his reach. However hyperborean it may be, that sea has, nevertheless, like most other seas, civilized its bordering tribes. It alone could connect Muscovy with ancient Europe; it was especially through that inlet, and by the ports on the gulfs of Finland and of Riga, that Russia could aspire to civilization. It would dispel from her atmosphere the heavy vapours of that two-fold Asiatic and Gothic barbarism, which lent obstinacy to each other, and of which the double source was so near to it.

But those ports belonged to a warlike land, thickly studded with strong fortresses, and defended by a formidable nation. It mattered not; every thing ought to be tried to attain so important an object.

Peter, however, did not deem it proper to make such strenuous efforts, without being certain of the utility of that which he sought to acquire. There was nothing around him which could give him an idea of the nations which he was to gain over, or to conquer, and which were

* 1695.

recommended to him as models. It was not on the mere word of adventurers that he ought to become the reformer of his people; he was desirous, with his own eyes, to behold civilization in its mature state, full of life, to form a judgment of it in its effects, in its totality, in its details, and to derive it from its source. He departed;* and, by this first step of the sovereign, he broke down the barrier which despotism and superstition had raised between the Russians and Europe, and which rendered war their only connecting link with the civilized world.

At that period, Mustapha II. was vanquished by the emperor Leopold; Sobieski was dead; and Poland was hesitating between the Prince of Conti and Augustus of Saxony; the celebrated Stadtholder William I. reigned over England; Louis XIV. was on the point of concluding the treaty of Ryswick; the Elector of Brandenburg purchased the title of king; and Charles XII. ascended the throne.

Peter was only twenty-four years of age, and even now the plan of his whole life seemed to be irrevocably laid down. His journey shows it; he began by Livonia, on which, at the risk of his liberty, he made his observations in Riga: thenceforth, he could not rest till he had acquired that maritime province, that outlet, that source of commerce and civilization, through which his empire was one day to be enriched and enlightened.

In his progress, he gained the friendship of Prussia, a power which, at a future time, might assist his efforts; Poland ought to be his ally, and already he declared himself the supporter of the Saxon prince who was about to rule it.

Hamburgh, Holland, England, contended for the esteem of a monarch, the harvest of whose possessions their com-

* 1697.

merce was eager to reap ; but he, careless of the repulsiveness of Sweden, and of his triumphal reception by the other northern states, advanced steadily onward towards his purpose, without turning from it his attention. Amidst nations so superior in knowledge, he, unaffectedly simple, as true greatness ever is, despised nothing ; in his eyes, useful science placed every thing on an equality. He listened with the same deportment to the lessons of kings and of artisans ; raising to his own level all kinds of utility, all kinds of superiority, from whatever quarter they came ; and thus proving himself, unconsciously, and by the strength of character alone, above the prejudices, not only of his own country, to which he wished to be an example, but also of the nations which he took for his models.

For seventeen months, Germany, Holland, England, and Austria, saw a young barbarian of twenty-five, whom a treacherous sister, in his tenderest infancy, had delivered over to the most violent passions—a lover of wine, of women, and of authority—quitting his absolute throne, a war begun under happy auspices, and all that throng of seductions by which power is incessantly besieged, to visit, with the compass, the axe, and the scalpel, in his hand, their manufactories, their workshops, their hospitals, to study practically there all the sciences, which he, and he alone, amidst his people, considered as indispensable to their prosperity, their glory, and their independence.

Neither the study and the cares of politics, nor the wars which he continued to carry on, nor those for which he prepared, could turn him aside from this obscure and painful labour ; he was sustained by the importance of his enterprise ; while, at the same time, he did not allow the splendour and magnitude of the prize which was perpetually present to his mind, to seduce him into imprudent precipitation for the purpose of obtaining it.

He was, indeed, one of the men of a great age, of an age which surpassed all others in greatness, because it was conscientious ; because every thing in it was more deeply impressed with the stamp of truth, and because the especial object of many was to be sincerely and entirely that which, in later days, it has been the grand object of others to appear to be.

At the same time, Peter either drew, or impelled out of Russia, and towards the light of European knowledge, four hundred young Russians : he himself led back to it seven hundred foreigners, skilled in those arts and sciences which were most necessary to his empire ; and others were perpetually lured to enter into his service.

Nor let it be imagined that we behold the eye of a barbarian, suddenly dazzled by the civilization of the great age of Louis XIV. going astray from its real object, in attention to minute peculiarities. Peter had undertaken to re-edify and to instruct a society of fifteen millions of men, grown stiff in prejudices, in superstition, and in sordid habits. It was not alone his subjects that he was desirous of civilizing, but likewise the soil which they inhabited ; he wished to ameliorate, and, indeed, to transform, the whole moral and physical nature of the realm over which his dominion extended.

In an enterprize so gigantic, where it was necessary to put force upon those two natures,—an enterprize by which all minds were to be so much agitated, which was so powerfully to give motion to man, and even to the soil on which he trod, and which was to be accomplished at such an expense of labour, of treasure, and of blood,—it was impossible for him to act unhesitatingly and steadily, without that strong conviction which can never be produced but by a thorough knowledge of the subject.

He well knew that here, still more than elsewhere, it

would not be enough to give an order without setting an example ; that it could not be set merely by a few foreign teachers ; that, therefore, he must himself put his hand to every thing ; and that even that hand, royal, and strong, and skilful as it was, would hardly afford a sufficiently powerful example.

This is an example which stands alone in history ! it is the example of a despot no doubt ; a despot by birth, by station, by necessity, by the ascendancy of genius, by nature, and because slaves must have a master ! but, which seems utterly incompatible, a despot more patriotic, more constantly and wholly devoted to the welfare of his nation, than ever was any citizen of a modern or even of an ancient republic !

CHAPTER IV.

AND what other instrument than despotism could he use among a people trebly slaves, by the conquest under the first Russians, by the domination of the Tartars, and by the concentration of power which released them from the Tartar yoke ; a people, among whom children were the slaves of their fathers, and wives of their husbands ; where, in a word, all were at once masters and slaves : two situations, one of which is amply sufficient to pervert human beings ?

In that country, then the abode of barbarism, even those who had the largest share of learning, had no other mode of reckoning than by strings of balls ; their priests, Greeks by religion, were ignorant of Greek and Latin, scarcely knew how to read, and wallowed in perpetual drunken-

ness : a typographical correction made in the clumsy editions of their Bible, was looked upon by them as a horrible sacrilege ; they were a people truly idolatrous, by their excessive adoration of the saints, each individual having the image of his own, which his fellow countrymen could not pray to without being prosecuted and sentenced to damages, for having stolen favours from an image which another had ruined himself to enrich and adorn.

They were men, a great part of whom were so thoroughly brutified by wretchedness, as to believe that heaven was not made for them, but only for their princes and boyards ; for those very grandees who, nevertheless, were publicly scourged for theft, without their being degraded, without believing their rank to be disgraced, either by the shame of the crime, or the shame of the punishment.

They were, in a word, the same people of whom, by a single nod, the Ivans had transported thousands of proprietors from the south to the north, and from the north to the south, of their empire ; who, without a murmur, had suffered bears to be let loose upon them, for diversion, in the streets of the capital ; whose nobles returned thanks to the prince when, at a banquet, he beat or mutilated them for his sport. A barbarous country, where, in the numerous butcheries of pretended state criminals, the Grand-Princes and his courtiers themselves played the part of executioners upon the principal conspirators ; a government so ill-constructed and absurd, that civil and military functions were confounded in the same hands ; a national mass so mis-shapen and so unhealthy, that it was scarcely able to repulse a remnant of Tartars ; and which, had it continued in the state that Peter found it in, Charles XII. would, perhaps, have conquered as easily as Siberia had been conquered by itself, and America by Europe.

And yet, nobles, priests, people, every one, even to the

first wife and the son of the reformer, clung to these boorish manners, and to this benighted ignorance; obstinately determined to live over again the life of their fathers; perpetually re-commencing instead of making progress.

The nobles, who had been discontented since the time of Ivan IV. and especially since the destruction, by Fœdor, of their exclusive titles to the ranks and places held by their ancestors, refused to obey; they abhorred the new system which Peter sought to introduce, where it was necessary to begin by obeying, where every thing required to be learned, and where rank depended on merit.

The priests, superstitious from their calling, fanatical from ignorance, from interest, and from the pride inspired by their influence over a people still more ignorant than themselves; the priests, whose patriarchal throne, since the accession of the second race, had stood so close to the regal throne; they, beforehand, poured forth their maledictions upon all innovation, and especially when brought from countries where a dreaded sect was triumphant. By them, the first printing-office, which Alexis endeavoured to establish, had been burned. Thus did they repel all improvements, as abominable acts of sacrilege; and to this they were prompted either by a fanatical spirit, or by the instinct of immutability which, in fact, is indispensable to the existence of all power that is built upon error and superstition.

As to the people, the example of the two other classes, and the influence which they exercised over them, were sufficient to harden them in their barbarous manners; even independent of the force of habit, which operated powerfully on all classes, and which is generally strong in proportion to the worthlessness of the custom from which it has originated.

But Peter had formed a correct estimate of the three

elements on which he wished to act: he knew that the State, such as his genius conceived it, was entirely concentrated in himself. He was aware that the clergy were not likely to become a dangerous power. It is true that, having constantly increased their numbers and their privileges since the time of Vladimir the Great,* we find them, in 1700, the persons first consulted on all important affairs, exercising the right of sentencing to death without appeal, and possessing one half of the property of the empire. Yet, notwithstanding all this, traditionary feelings, interest, and weakness, had always retained them in obedience.

The causes of this constant submission to the head of the Government have already been assigned: the most prominent cause has been stated to be, the obligation which the priests were under of being married—a custom which introduced into their corporation the most heterogeneous parts; which weakened the corporate spirit by the mixture of contrary interests with it; which linked them with civil life by rendering them as much citizens as priests; and lastly, which occasioned them to be less respected by their flocks, in consequence of their too near approach to the multitude in point of situation.

We have seen, that uniformly, in the midst of commotions, and of extreme dangers, the priests, and especially their primate, who was almost always a foreigner, felt the paramount necessity of order, and of supporting with all their strength, a government by which alone they could be supported.

Thus the primates and the Grand-Princes had grown great by the aid of each other; and no sooner was a czar seen at Moscow, than a primate was also seen there.

* About the year 1000.

But these faithful allies of the Grand-Princes, who for centuries had assisted them to subdue the rebellious Russians by means of the Tartars, and the Tartars by means of the at length united Russians, now, prompted by ambition or superstition, dared to resist them in their turn ; and it was against Peter the Great that their resistance was directed ! But the clergy had so successfully contributed to enhance the power of the tzars, that that power was become sufficient of itself to crush them, with a single word, and without assistance from any quarter.

In the first place, the priests endeavoured to excite the nation to revolt ; but to whom did they address themselves ? to the nobles. Had they, then, forgotten, that it was mainly by the help of their patriarch, that the elder brother of this very Tzar gave the final blow to the nobility, by destroying their privileges. Besides, vainly did the clergy lean for support on the shadow of a body, which, even from the period of its origin, had never been possessed of regularity and consistence. Peter, who was the first to collect its annals, well knew its long-continued weakness. He knew that the nobles could derive no energy from the pride of their recollections ; he knew their protracted submission to the cities and the Russian petty princes ; their three centuries of servility to the brutal whimsies of the meanest Tartar traveller or trader. In their benighted history, his eyes could scarcely discern their obscure ancestors, till the fall of the princes who held appanages, and the blending of them and of the Tartars with the nobility, gave rise to a court aristocracy, which prided itself on being the slave of its monarch. Then it was, that they pretended to those hereditary privileges of favour and of rank, which they still so bitterly regretted.

But Peter was not ignorant of the abasement of those nobles before the pride of Ivan III. “ Every place,”

that monarch had told them, “ought to be held good by them for his service.” Peter, indeed, seemed but too much to approve the executions of the great boyards of that prince, and the massacres of Ivan IV. He knew that the grandees of Russia had borne the insane atrocities of that infamous tyrant, like vile courtiers, like slaves even, and had possessed no other stability than that which they derived from the power that had been pleased to raise them, and which afterwards thought proper to annihilate them.

In the election of the parricidal Godunof, amidst that vast army of vassals which the nobles brought to him ; in the series of native or foreign usurpers, who had tyrannized with impunity during their momentary possession of the throne ; the youthful Tzar saw, in a stronger light, all the withering and degrading power of servitude ; and yet, those nobles contended with each other for precedence ! At once masters and slaves, they were arrogant and servile, but still more servile than they were arrogant. They had perpetually sacrificed the state to their unbearable pretensions ; important expeditions had been frustrated by their pride ; the wounded vanity of these nobles had even left the country without defenders ; the empire had been disturbed, shaken to its basis, and laid open by it. To this vanity was added an envious horror of the foreigners who were called in to instruct them ; it ruined the army before Smolensk, under the grandfather of Peter the Great ; it had recently obliterated the traces of some of those steps which his father had taken towards the improvement of the Russians. At that period it was, that the childhood of the reformer was astonished by a scene which was without a precedent in history. The Kremlin is said to have been the theatre of it. Fœdor, his eldest brother, and his minister, Golitzin, reigned there. The grandees of the state had been assembled, and all the evi-

dence relative to their titles had been brought with them ; in the midst of these heads of the nobles, the patriarch concluded an animated harangue, by inveighing against their prerogatives. “ They are,” said he, “ a bitter source of every kind of evil ; they render abortive the most useful enterprises, in like manner as the tares stifle the good grain ; they have introduced, even into the heart of families, dissensions, confusion, and hatred ; but the pontiff comprehends the grand design of his Tzar. God alone can have inspired it !” At these words, and by anticipation, all the grandees blindly hastened to express their approval ; and, suddenly, Fœdor, whom this generous unanimity seemed to enrapture, arose and proclaimed, in a simulated burst of holy enthusiasm, the abolition of all their hereditary ranks. “ To extinguish even the recollection of them,” said he, “ let all the papers relative to those titles be instantly consumed !” And, as the fire was ready, he ordered them to be thrown into the flames, before the dismayed eyes of the nobles, who strove to conceal their anguish by dastardly acclamations.

These were not corporate privileges, which are so useful as a counterpoise. They were not even family privileges ; they were merely insulated interests, individual pretensions to rank, command, and precedence, founded on the absurd opinion, that a place, formerly given by the Prince, conferred hereditary rank. A ridiculous and contemptible vanity, often condemned to the knout and to cudgelling, and which was made for it.

Such was this rude, imperfect nobility, the barbarous period of which, thanks to Peter the Great, was to end with the seventeenth century.

But the other nobilities of Europe have no right to reproach it with its past debasement. The early days of their domination were not less deplorable than those of its

slavery. All of them were the offspring of war and barbarism, and all, for a longer or shorter time, bore the stamp of this origin ; but, on the other hand, each of them had its distinguishing virtues ; fidelity and valour were those of the Russian nobility ; and if it must be confessed to have been obscure when the others were chivalric, enslaved when they were dominant, and longer sunk in barbarism, a few words, as to the condition of the Russian people previously to the eighteenth century, by completing this picture of the state of the various classes of the nation anterior to Peter the Great, will show that the circumstances, which, elsewhere, have always had a powerful influence, were imperious, absolute, and irresistible in Russia.

What availed it, that the Prince, to whom his people are indebted for collecting the materials of their history, might see in that history the traces of their primitive liberty, and those of their nascent civilization, as far back as the eleventh century ; must not the most striking object which he perceived in their annals have been the throng of princes, with their guards, all possessors of cities, and the consequent fever of foreign and domestic war which consumed the unfortunate country ? For three centuries and a half, from 1100 to 1460, it disordered, overthrew, and destroyed every thing. Posterior to 1224, and for two hundred years, every roaming Tartar could wander there, like a master among his slaves.

In their pitiless invasion, those migratory enemies particularly made war upon cities. The bravest princes, their guards, and the most valuable citizens, perished at the outset by fire and sword : with them died the country. When they were gone, national pride ceased to exist ; every moral feeling became degraded ; artifice and stratagem, the only resources of hopeless despair, formed a part

of the manners ; it was only by dint of patience, of suberviency, and of money, that it was possible to purchase from the Tartars a moment of safety, or the preservation of any object whatever, from the crown of a Grand-Prince to the simple stove which served as the bed of the humblest peasant.

Meanwhile the ambition and the cupidity of the Russian princes, which were the causes of such numerous calamities, were still active in this mire, and were added to the other scourges of Russia. The citizen sank into such a wretched condition, that the law was obliged to allow him to sell his children four times, and also to sell himself. Men became rapacious, and insensible to insult and shame. "The Russia of that period," exclaims their national historian, "was rather a gloomy forest than an empire !"

Amidst this chaos, it is true that the Russian republics of the north remained free and powerful. There, the primitive liberty of the Slavonians was long preserved ; but it was a barbarous liberty, which fell in its turn, when foreign oppression was succeeded by domestic tyranny. This latter barbarism trampled down all the others ; then, to establish an unchangeable order among these various classes of slaves, which were stretched upon each other, the last, the lowest, in one word, the people, were bound down to the soil.

Yet, it was subsequently to this last outrageous manifestation of despotism that, even in Moscow, the people seem to have exercised the greatest influence. Witness the revolts which occurred from the time of Mikhail to that of Sophia. Peter the Great could attribute this new spirit only to the concussion caused by the extinction of the sacred race of Rurik, the mildness of his ancestors, the union of the free Cossacks with the empire, and, especially, the creation of the Strelitz ; for those vanquishers of the Tartars, those

satellites of Ivan IV. petty citizens of the larger cities, at the end of the seventeenth century, were nothing more than blind and fanatical Janissaries. There was now an armed people, armed, not for liberty, but for licentiousness; another despotism, that of the multitude, the least durable, indeed, but the most intolerable of all.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

SUCH was the chaos in which Peter the Great wished to restore order, and from whence he departed to obtain the light by which he was at last to illumine it. In this utter confusion of prejudices and of manners, what was there for him to respect and treat with caution ; especially when the obstinate blindness of the people rendered it necessary that the mighty work of regeneration should be accomplished during the short life of one man ? As every thing must be done by himself, speed was requisite ; all the changes must be abruptly produced ; and, as in the case of Vladimir the Great, the god of barbarism must be at once thrown into the waves, that the god of civilization might be immediately introduced.

Moreover, abruptness takes by surprise ; which is one mode of bringing affairs to a termination.

Besides, it is not sufficiently known by what a multitude of criminal attempts against his life, the reformer's despotic temper and natural ferocity were irritated. Sometimes it was the sword of rebellion that he had to fly from or to break ; sometimes, to escape the poison, which is said to have been prepared by a sister's hand ; at a later period,

the dagger of a Raskolnick fell at his feet, at the moment when the assassin was on the point of using it.

The Strelitz in particular, who saw themselves supplanted by the regiments disciplined in the European manner, were actively hostile. The childhood and youth of Peter had several times escaped from their rage; and now, in the horror which was inspired by the annunciation of his departure for profane Europe, they determined to sacrifice an impious Tzar, who was ready to defile himself by the sacrilegious touch of foreigners, whom they abhorred.

They saw in the midst of them twelve thousand heretics, already organized, who would remain masters of their holy city; while they themselves, exiled to the army, were destined to fight at a distance on the frontier.* Nor was this their only grievance; for, either from necessity, or from his youthful and energetic genius being desirous to accomplish too much and too soon, Peter the Great had given orders to construct a fleet of a hundred vessels; and of this sudden creation they complained, as being an insupportable tax in the midst of an already ruinous war, and as rendering it necessary to introduce into their sacred land a fresh supply of those schismatical artisans who were preferred to them.

Like all malcontents, the Strelitz believed that discontent was universal. It was this belief which, in Moscow itself, and a few days before the departure of their sovereign, emboldened Tsikler and Sukanim, two of their leaders, to plot a nocturnal conflagration. They knew that Peter would be the first to hasten to it; and, in the midst of the tumult and confusion common to such accidents, they meant to murder him without mercy, and then to massacre all the foreigners who had been set over them as masters.

Such was the infamous scheme. The hour which they

* See Perry, Stahlin, &c. &c.

had fixed for its accomplishment was at hand. They had accomplices but no impeachers ; and, when assembled at a banquet, they all sought in intoxicating liquors the courage which was required for so dreadful an execution.

But, like all intoxications, this produced various effects, according to the difference of constitution in those by whom it was felt. Two of these villains lost in it their boldness ; they infected each other, not with just remorse, but with a dastardly fear ; and, escaping from one crime by another, they left the company under a specious pretext, promising to their accomplices to return in time, and hurried to the Tzar to disclose the plot.

At midnight the blow was to have been struck ; and Peter gave orders that, exactly at eleven, the abode of the conspirators should be closely surrounded. Shortly after, thinking that the hour was come, he went singly to the haunt of these ruffians ; he entered boldly, certain that he should find nothing but trembling criminals, already fettered by his guards. But his impatience had anticipated the time, and he found himself, single and unarmed, in the midst of their unshackled, daring, well-armed band, at the instant when they were vociferating the last words of an oath that they would achieve his destruction.

At his unexpected appearance, however, they all arose in confusion. Peter, on his side, comprehending the full extent of his danger, exasperated at the supposed disobedience of his guards, and furious at having thrown himself into peril, suppressed, nevertheless, the violence of his emotions. Having gone too far to recede, he did not lose his presence of mind ; he unhesitatingly advanced among this throng of traitors, greeted them familiarly, and, in a calm and natural tone, said, that, “ as he was passing by their house, he saw a light in it ; that supposing that they were amusing themselves, he had entered in order to share their

pleasures." He then seated himself, and drank to his assassins, who, standing up around him, could not avoid putting the glass about, and drinking his health.

But soon they began to consult each other by their looks, to make numerous signs, and to grow more daring ; one of them even leaned over to Sukanim, and said, in a low voice, " Brother, it is time !" The latter, for what reason is unknown, hesitated, and had scarcely replied, " Not yet," when Peter, who heard him, and who also heard at last the footsteps of his guards, started from his seat, knocked him down by a blow in the face, and exclaimed, " If it is not yet time for you, scoundrel, it is for me !" This blow, and the sight of the guards, threw the assassins into consternation ; they fell on their knees, and implored forgiveness. " Chain them !" replied the terrible Tzar. Then, turning to the officer of the guards, he struck him, and reproached him with his want of punctuality ; but the latter showed him his order ; and the Tzar, perceiving his mistake, clasped him in his arms, kissed him on the forehead, proclaimed his fidelity, and entrusted him with the custody of the traitors.

His vengeance was terrible ; the punishment was more ferocious than the crime. First the rack, then the successive mutilation of each member : then death, when not enough of blood and life was left to allow of the sense of suffering. To close the whole, the heads were exposed on the summit of a column, the members being symmetrically arranged around them, as ornaments : a scene worthy of a government of masters and of slaves, reciprocally brutifying each other, and whose only god was fear.

CHAPTER II.

THIS terrific execution seems, however, to have kept the people within bounds during the seventeen months' absence of their master; but a still more dreadful example was necessary to put down entirely the spirit of insurrection among these barbarians, and to drag them from that darkness in which they delighted.

At the departure of Peter, this abortive conspiracy had secured for a while the tranquillity of the empire: he was recalled by a new revolt of barbarism. The Strelitz were again the actors: so sacred was their cause, that the priests declared it would render them invulnerable. They accordingly deserted the army, and marched in great numbers towards Moscow, where their accomplices waited in expectation of them.

But every thing had been anticipated. The place of the Tzar was filled by Romodanovsky, an old boyard of steady fidelity, inflexible resolution, rugged and capricious in his manners, and who pushed even to atrocity the brutal justice of that age. Gordon, a Scotchman, and his twelve thousand experienced soldiers, disciplined in the European fashion, most of them Frenchmen, and all of them conscious that, amidst these barbarians, their lives depended on the existence of the reformer, had the keeping of Moscow for their sovereign. The combat was a brief one; the army of barbarism was vanquished, disarmed, and fettered, by the army of civilization.

Peter, who was then at Vienna, and on the eve of proceeding to Italy, hurried back amidst this victory of order

over disorder : he turned it to account. But not so when, just returned from civilized countries, he relapsed into all the ferocity of the savage manners which he wanted to reform, and which he now displayed by torturing and rending with his own hands two thousand of these wretched Janissaries. True, they were the same barbarians who were formerly the murderers of the grandees of the state, the executioners of his family, the thrice baffled assassins of his childhood and his youth ; true, they were the same audacious beings, who, with the axe in their hands, had aspired to govern the state amidst their sanguinary saturnalia ; the same revolvers who, doubly traitors to their country, had recently abandoned its frontier to overthrow his government, and to replunge it into darkness. But, enormous as were such numerous crimes, they cannot justify the atrociousness of so many executions ; nor can it find an excuse in the strong influence of the manners and customs of that period, nor in the necessity of the circumstances, and of the severe measures which it was indispensable to adopt with brutal and ferocious slaves.

The details of them are horrible ; but history cannot pass them over. Peter himself interrogated the criminals by torture ; then, in imitation of Ivan the Tyrant, he constituted himself their judge and their executioner ; the nobles who remained faithful he compelled to cut off the heads of the guilty nobles, whom they had just condemned. Seated on his throne, the cruel being witnessed the executions with tearless eyes ; he went still farther ; with the festivity of banquets he blended the horrors of these punishments. Intoxicated with wine and with blood, the glass in one hand, the axe in the other, in a single hour twenty successive libations marked the fall of twenty heads of the Strelitz, which he smote off at his feet, exulting, meanwhile, in the horrible skill which he displayed. In the following

year, the consequences, either of the insurrection of these Janissaries, or of the brutality with which they were punished, were manifested in distant parts of the empire; fresh insurrections broke out. Eighty Strelitz, loaded with chains, were dragged from Asoph to Moscow, and their heads, which a boyard successively held up by the hair, again fell beneath the axe of the Tzar. For five whole months he made wheels and gibbets incessantly exhibit to the gaze their disgusting prey ! *

Sophia was still a prisoner ; her fallen ambition had not been deadened amidst the silence of a cloister and the solitude of disgrace. An address from the Strelitz had again invited her to assume the crown. But Peter hanged the three authors of it before the windows of the princess, and ordered that, in his sister's own chamber, the stiffened arm of one of the dead bodies should hold out to her the criminal address, till it dropped decayed at the feet of that ambitious female.

Discouraged, at length, the Regent renounced the world for the cloister, and her name for that of Marpha, and died in 1704.

The foreigners, whose lives were preserved by this rigour, regarded it with horror ; they looked for justice, not for vengeance.

Accordingly, in their eyes, Peter the Great derived no real advantage from his victory, till he had disbanded and dispersed the barbarian army, and completed the formation of a civilized army, which he dressed in the German fashion.

Having secured his power by means of terror and discipline, he thus began his reformation by externals ; well knowing that, with such a coarse-minded people, essentials

* Korb, Prinz, &c. &c.

and forms are nearly connected : that he could not make them forget their ancient manners, while they were perpetually reminded of them by their dress, and their Gothic and Tartar beards, the livery of their barbarism ; that he must strip them of the Asiatic robe, which was as invariable in its shape as the manners and the ignorance of indolent and stagnant Asia ; and must thus put an end to the conformity which linked them with Asia, and made so marked a difference, a line of separation, an additional obstacle, between the Russian and the European.

For this dress, therefore, which was also little suited to the modern art of war, and to the practice of several other arts, he deemed it necessary to substitute the European dress ; variable in its shape, the fashion of which requires more dexterity, and seems more favourable to the activity of a people who are always pushing on towards perfection in every thing : he was, in short, desirous to establish one likeness which might lead to others ; and this, too, in the most obvious and striking point of similarity between his own people and those whom he meant to be their models.

It was a combat of manners that he now began ; the longest, the most dangerous, and the most inveterate combat of all. In this great struggle, where he stood alone against a whole people, he could neglect nothing ; and it was one step towards success, to substitute the uniform of civilization in place of the vestments of barbarism.

This was also the reason why, after having thus changed the external appearance, he changed the titles, the viands, and all the social habits. The names of boyards, of okol-nitchie, of dumnie-diaki, were dismissed along with the Tartar robes and the Gothic beards. In their stead, Peter substituted the denominations of presidents, counsellors, and senators : he wished to link his nation to civilized nations,

by the sight, the hearing, the taste, and by all the senses ; for he knew, far better than his censors, that this is the only mode of beginning with an uncultivated people ; that their habits can be vanquished only by other habits ; and that when the outward and visible sign is once got rid of, the ideas and manners which it recalled to mind will be soon forgotten and replaced by others.

He, therefore, imposed a tax upon Asiatic robes, as well as upon beards ; and thus set the avariciousness of age in opposition to its obstinacy.

From this tax he excepted only the priests and the peasants ; the priests, because their costume was an article of faith ; the peasants, because they were of little consequence, and the desire of distinguishing themselves from that lowest class, would be to the nobles and traders an additional motive for obedience.

Besides, the brutal superstition of the Russians afforded another strong reason for this change of customs. They had a horror of foreigners, as being heretics. On several occasions, betrayed by their European dress, those whom Alexis had invited for the purpose of instructing his subjects, had narrowly escaped being torn to pieces, even in Moscow. It had been necessary, as among the Turks, to allot them a separate quarter to reside in, out of which they durst not venture, at least, without concealing themselves in a Russian garb. Even under that disguise their lives were not safe, the Russian priests having forbidden, as an act of sacrilegious profanation, the wearing of it by foreigners.

As to the ancient religious and social usages, which bore the stamp of barbarism, Peter attacked them by ridicule. He multiplied in his palace entertainments in the European style ; he invited himself to those which his subjects gave in imitation of him ; and he left presents with

his hosts to defray the expenses which they had incurred.

Till this period, females had lived in seclusion, and young men had been united to young women without ever having seen them. It was here, as it is in Asia, but under quite another climate, with another religion, and without polygamy, by which this usage is rendered less hateful. These customs Peter destroyed ; and by so doing he gained over to his side all the young men, and particularly the young women. From being slaves and hermits, he called them into the society of men, and thus made civilization take its most gigantic stride, by entrusting it to that sex which is most interested in strength being tempered by mildness.

CHAPTER III.

To the society which he was thus endeavouring to form, the grossness of the age rendered it necessary that he should give a code of regulations. But, at the outset, he was obliged, in a preamble, to explain to these barbarians what is called *a party* in civilized Europe ; then, like most great men, showing himself capable of entering into the minutest details, he, in the first, second, fourth, and sixth articles, decreed, that each of these assemblies should be announced by a written card ; he ordered that every man of distinction, noble, superior officer, trader, person employed in the chancery, and master-workmen, (that is to say, especially, a ship carpenter, and master shipwright) should be admissible to them with his wife, and might enter and depart when he pleased, between four o'clock and ten at night.

The third and fifth articles imposed the obligation of bowing to the company, on entering and quitting the room. With respect to the host, he directed that, like his company, he should be at full liberty to come and go, to be seated, and to drink, in the rooms, as soon as he should have sufficiently provided them with chairs, liquors, and all the means of amusement.

The seventh article even went so far as to point out the place for the servants.

By the fifth, it was ordained, that every transgressor of the rules should be obliged instantly to empty the *great eagle*, a large bottle full of brandy; a grotesque punishment, which exists also among the Chinese. Peter thus inflicted as a penalty what had till then been considered as a pleasure. It is uncertain whether this was done to disgust them with the practice, or rather, to hold out to the intemperate an additional lure to these parties, where, by their mixture with women and industrious foreigners, they were ultimately to be humanized and enlightened.

At the same time that he invited foreigners of all professions into Russia, he forced out of Russia, into Europe, a throng of young nobles. By exposing them to the very focus of light, he wished, as it were, to consume in them the old Russian man; the benefits which they repelled, he expected to make them appreciate, by compelling them to become acquainted with them.

He likewise entrusted to a regular administration, composed of select merchants, the task of collecting the revenue of the state. Hitherto this office had been parcelled out, in large divisions, to the boyards, who sold it piece-meal to the governors of cities; a mode which established a shameful traffic of the public resources, and put all kinds of power into the hands of these armed tax-gatherers.

By another ancient usage, the commencement of the year was fixed at the fruit season, as representing the commencement of the universe.

This was deciding the question of the primogeniture of the egg and the chicken; a question apparently so simple, but with which the good Plutarch said, “that all the vast and ponderous machine of the creation of the world might be moved!” Peter resolved that Russia, like the rest of Europe, should conform to the order of Sabeism, which, without being the basis of an entirely moral and spiritual religion has, at least, succeeded in regulating its forms. He, therefore, decreed that the first day of the year should date from January, the period of the revivification or return of the sun.

The introduction of tobacco, the use of which the priests had anathematized, had been one of the principal causes of the revolt of the Strelitz. Peter the Great persevered in this innovation. The monopoly of this commerce, which he had sold to the English, had served to defray the expenses of his travels, and to draw industrious foreigners into his country. This new custom would, also, eradicate a superstitious prejudice, which was an additional barrier between his subjects, of whom he wished to make sailors, and the sailors of the rest of Europe.

But the Tzars and the priests, hitherto always acting in concert, and deriving power from each other, had connected the majority of these usages with religion. The priests undertook the defence of them; but Peter attacked these champions with ridicule: he parodied, with the youths who followed his person, their fantastic, interested, or superstitious customs; he taxed them like his other subjects; and an ukase prohibited vows from being taken before the age of fifty, an age at which all ties are either formed or broken. By thus diminishing the number of convents, Peter in-

creased his subjects, his revenues, and his domains. As the priests persevered in their hostility, Peter did not appoint a patriarch in the place of the one who died; or rather, he joined the tiara to his crown, by creating, instead of the head of the church, a synod, which took an oath of obedience to him.

In this thorny path, however, he moved on gradually, with the deliberate progress of a founder. It was not till after a delay of twenty years had taken place in the election of a new patriarch, that he announced the abolition of that dignity; nor was it till after the conclusion of the peace of Nystadt, when Heaven was supposed to have declared in his favour by the multitude, who consider all success or reverse as coming from above, and always believe the Deity to be on the strongest side.

To Catholic eyes this may appear a surprising stroke of authority; but it will seem less astonishing, when we call to mind that the Russian Grand-Princes were the founders, apostles, saints, and martyrs, of the Greek religion in Russia; that, consequently, they were looked upon as the heads of a religion, founded, preserved, and sanctified by them; and, still more than this, that, in their gross ignorance, these people, brutified as they were by all kinds of slavery, paid an almost equal veneration to God and to the Tzar.

CHAPTER IV.

MEANWHILE, the superstition of ancient recollections, that of habit, and that which the priests inspired, were acting on the minds of the nobles. Being slaves, their resistance was confined to remaining inert; they refused to serve their country; secluded in their wooden houses, they gave vent to murmurs; and, it must be owned, that in their complaints against their master, every thing is true, though all of them are not reasonable. “By what right did his brother burn the evidence of their titles, which secured their ranks at the court and in the army? What were those pretended registers of nobility, in which their names were inscribed? They were nothing but lists of proscription, to prevent any of them escaping the humiliations in which they were steeped to the lips; for their resignation was no longer sufficient! Obscurity even had ceased to be a shelter; their very slaves were compelled to denounce them for being tranquil. The despot had imagined a general happiness, composed of the wretchedness of each individual; all must bend, all must be transformed, before the imprudent innovator. He kept his course onward to his goal, amidst the sorrowful cries of a whole people, without any thing having the power to stop him, or to turn him aside.

“Thus, he had torn from them even their children, to infect them with impious sciences, which were unknown and useless to their ancestors; then, driving them into sacrilege, violating the law of God himself, which prohibited Israel from having any communication with its idolatrous neighbours, he had forced them out of their holy land; he

had sent them afar off, to remote countries, to defile both body and soul, by coming in contact with those atheistical nations, which he held up to them as a model.

“ It would have been something, had he displayed any solicitude for the well-being of those young men ; but no, they were cast, without precaution, without protection, into distant lands. There, entirely out of their depth, ignorant of the language of the country, and having no guides, they established themselves by bands in some house, which they quitted only to become corrupted, and to bring back to Russia, along with new vices, nothing but some manual arts, learnt mechanically, and without Nature having given to the learners any talent or inclination for them.

“ What, indeed, could be expected from a Prince, who, since his earliest childhood, had disrespectfully treated the old boyards, and spurned even the accustomed homage of the young nobility ! And why ? That he might shut himself up with men of low extraction, vile foreigners, in his village of Prebagenskoï, where nothing was heard but the noise of banquets, and the howlings of drunkenness.

“ Look also at Romadanovsky, his worthy representative, with his pleasing employment, his favourite passion for putting men to the rack, on the least doubt, on the slightest accusation, for any inadvertence casually committed towards the Tzar, whose domains he was daily swelling by his confiscations. This was, indeed, a choice becoming a prince who had instituted military commissions to try civil causes, and had rewarded and solicited the rigour of the judges, by giving them the lands of the condemned, whose moveable property he himself retained !

“ Accordingly, to this executioner had he recently committed the management of his state-inquisition, a tribunal of blood, the infernal invention of his father or of himself.

Henceforth, on the mere cry of 'Slovo-i-delo,' from the meanest of their slaves, all of them, great or small, might be plunged into horrible dungeons. What availed it, that there the informer would be chained near his victim; that he must even thrice undergo the torture? If he persisted in his denunciation, would it not be the turn of his unfortunate victim to submit to that infamous and atrocious ordeal?

"But the prince cared not for this. More absolute than all his ancestors, he respected nothing; neither essentials nor forms; he monopolized all commerce in his grasping hand, and had thus ruined several branches of it. Behold how he usurped every right; how he destroyed even the ancient formula of the Ukases—'The Council of Boyards decrees;' and this, too, in spite of the royal oath, required from his grandfather, 'that he would submit to the laws, and that he would decide no matter of importance, nor make any new laws, without the consent of the grandees of the state.' For nothing could escape his inflexible despotism. It extended to every usage; it was not enough that he had abjured the national mode of dress; his unworthy satellites, placed in ambush at the gates of the cities, must dare to mangle, even on the persons of the boyards, those majestic robes which they inherited from their ancestors. What kind of civilization was that which produced such coarse brutality? No thought was taken of the difficulties, or of the expense, or of the time that was necessary to workmen, as well as to masters, to acquire such strange habits. Even as far off as Astracan, his lieutenants, executing tyrannically, as they always did, his despotic orders, and preferring the garb to the man, had occasioned a revolt, a civil war, and a great destruction of men, merely for a form of dress.

"The children of his dearest generals, even the ne-

phews of Apraxin, were they not condemned to the labour of slaves for having preferred one mode of instruction to another?

“Had not the tyrant likewise converted into thousands of soldiers that throng of noble domestics, with which the great boyards had till now been surrounded! His envy had wrested from them this noble train of followers, this ornament of their dignity, this only remembrance that remained to them of the guards by which, of old, they were attended!

“Formerly, their peasants were required from them only in time of war, and for some months of the year: now they were taken from them for ever, to fill the ranks of that permanent army with which their Tzar oppressed them. Even the young boyards themselves! into what a degraded situation had he not plunged them? When had they before been summoned to the defence of the country for more than a limited period? When had there ever been an idea of dictating to them what should be their dress and their arms? Who had ever dared to make them march, except at the head of the militia of the cities, of their guards, and of their vassals? Henceforth, however, sacrificing their best years, insulated, and wearing an heretical uniform, they must submit to degrade themselves, and, with a musket in their hands, be blended with and lost in the ranks of that army!

“There, subjected to an apprenticeship, to an unsupportable discipline, and commanded by a Mentzikof, or some other upstart slave, or, which was still more disgusting, by hateful foreigners, they could never rise again to a less degrading situation, but by dint of toil. And why? To serve a tyrant, who had deprived them of the collecting of the public imposts: an impious being, who strove to change the course which God had assigned to the ri-

vers! a pagan, who had extended his sacrilegious hand to their beards, the emblem of their faith in the ancient patriarchs! the sacred imitation of their sacred images! Despoiled as they were of that venerable ensign, how would their holy patron henceforth recognize his chosen people? No other resource remained to them, than to conceal in their bosom that consecrated symbol, to preserve it at least for their coffin, that they might render an account of it to St. Nicholas, when the time should come for their passing into another world.*

CHAPTER V.

SUCH were some of their complaints. But since 1698, when many of them had shared in the revolt and the punishment of the Strelitz, the remainder had confined themselves to these murmurs. They hoped every thing from time; but as Peter hoped nothing from it, he pushed forward, by all possible means, the regeneration of his empire, that his labours might survive him.

The Tzar often reasoned with his boyards; displaying a patience which was not natural to him, he strove to overcome, by conviction, their obstinate bigotry. His language, like that of all great men, was at once spirited and picturesque, nervous and concise; for it is particularly in reference to men wholly devoted to action that it may with truth be said that the style is the man.

* All the proofs of these complaints may be found in Perry, Strahlenberg, the Foreign Resident, and the trial of Alexis; in Voltaire, Levesque, Leclerc, Manstein, and Munnich; and in the Traveller for thirteen years, the Memoirs of Catherine I., &c. &c.

But prejudices, habit, a haughty indolence, superstition, and the interest of their cast, appealed to the heart of the nobles more forcibly than the Tzar, and with far more perseverance. Accordingly, Peter did not stop at words. He seemed to consider these landed proprietors as nothing more than possessors of fiefs, who held them by the tenure of being serviceable to the state. Such was the spirit of the law relative to inheritances, which hitherto had been equally divided, but, of which, henceforth, the immoveable property was to descend to one of the males, the choice of whom was left to the father, while only the moveable property was to pass to the other children: a law which, in this respect, was favourable to paternal authority and to aristocracy, but the real purpose of which was rendered obvious by other clauses.

In reality, it decreed that the inheritors of moveable property should not be permitted to convert it into immoveable, till after seven years of military service, ten years of civil service, or fifteen years profession of some kind of art, or of commerce. Nay, more than this, if we may rely upon the authority of Perry, every heir of property to the amount of five hundred rubles, who had not learned the rudiments of his native language, or of some ancient or foreign language, was to forfeit his inheritance.

It was particularly among the priests and the nobility, that he attacked and disarmed the underhand and obstinate resistance which was made to him by barbarism. In pursuance of this system it was, that he formed several thousand cavalry out of the sons of the priests, who were free men, but no less ignorant and superstitious than their fathers. For the same reason, he transformed into soldiers, who were dressed and disciplined in the European

manner, the multitude of boyard-retainers, or noble domestics, by whom the boyards were perpetually attended.

Previously to 1709, however, most of the officers of his army were either foreigners, or of the inferior order of nobles, or of the class of the people ; for the other nobles kept themselves at a distance. But even in the sanctuary of their families, Peter made war upon their inertness. Every noble between the ages of ten and thirty, who evaded an enlistment, which was denominated voluntary, was to have his property confiscated to the use of the person by whom he was denounced.

It was by this measure that, in 1713, he violently snatched from the barbarian manners which their parents transmitted to them, all this froward race, and enrolled them among civilized beings. Some were placed in military schools which he established ; others were sent to acquire softer manners, and new habits and knowledge, among polished nations ; many of them were obliged to keep up a correspondence with him on the subject of what they were learning ; on their return, he himself questioned them, and if they were found not to have benefited by their travels, disgrace and ridicule were their punishment. Given up to the Tzar's buffoon, they became the laughing stocks of the court, and were compelled to perform the most degrading offices in the palace. These were the tyrannical punishments of a reformer, who imagined that he might succeed in doing violence to Nature, by commencing education at an age when it ought to be completed, and by subjecting grown up men to chastisements which would scarcely be bearable for children. For it is not intended to maintain, that this illustrious life was not interspersed with great errors ; that it was so may be easily conceived, since in the opinion of every one every thing was innovation ; and, as he acted on untract-

able and barren materials, he was under the necessity of making a number of fruitless trials; he was, also, too apt to form a judgment of others from himself, which generally leads to error, especially in kings and great men; in the first, because they differ too much from other men by their situation; in the second, because they differ in themselves.

Accordingly, Manstein reproaches Peter the Great, with having expected to transform, by travels into polished countries, men who were already confirmed in their habits, and who were entirely made up of ignorance, indolence, and barbarism. "The greatest part of them," says he, "acquired nothing but vices." This it was which drew upon Peter a lesson from his sage; for such was the appellation which he gave to Dologoruki. That senator having pertinaciously, and without assigning any reason, maintained that the travels of the Russian youth would be useless, made no other reply to an impatient and passionate contradiction from the despot, than to fold the ukase in silence, and run his nail forcibly along it, and then to desire the autocrat to try whether, with all his power, he could ever obliterate the crease that was made in the paper.

The good sense of Peter, it is said, felt all the propriety of this illustration; but he did not the less determine that all the nobles should be compelled to serve as volunteers, and at their own expense, in his naval and military forces. Thenceforth they could not obtain the rank and appointments of an officer, nor, in any company, the respect and distinctions exclusively belonging to that rank, till after having earned it by distinguished services.

This general obligation to serve, and this classification in the state and in society, regulated according to ranks which he alone conferred, placed the whole of the nobility under his inflexible hand. This is an unbearable despotism to

think of, but which he did not create. In Russia, it was the only law, the only rule, the only known means of government. The prince, as well as his subjects, had no idea of any other. Peter found it ingrained in the national manners; and, like his predecessors, he made use of it; not, however, as his caprice, or passions, or circumstances, might prompt him, but in subserviency to a vigorously conceived plan; for the benefit of public utility, which was his sole object, and with the confidence of genius; nor did he require from others, by so many tyrannical orders, more than a part of the sacrifices which he had imposed on himself.

And, besides, was it really such tyranny to compel the nobles to be useful? Did he not go back to the sources, to the spirit of that institution, when he refused to acknowledge as nobles those who were not ready to serve the state? Will he find detractors in this age of equality, the Muscovite prince of the seventeenth century, who declared the great and hitherto inaccessible career of nobility to be open to all his people? Was it not he who, after having himself been a soldier, decreed that every soldier who distinguished himself might, according to the rank which he obtained, acquire personal or hereditary nobility? And as, at the same time, he classed all civil offices, assimilating them to the military, it followed that this body of nobility, thus perpetually regenerated, that this *Legion of Honour*, daily recruited from men of all classes, who were deemed most qualified for the various branches of public service, must one day, as ought to be the case, become really the flower of the nation.

For it was only in a military manner that this reformer could secure obedience from slaves, who were subjected not merely to his despotism, but to all kinds of superstitious manners and habits; two servitudes of different kinds, the harmony of which was disturbed by his innova-

tions. It was, therefore, necessary to unite them both in one, and submit every thing to the same rule; and this was the reason why, instead of rendering the camp secondary to the city, he organized the city like a camp.

Listen, on this head, to the most intelligent and disinterested witnesses: observe how they admire the extraordinary care he took to estimate correctly the merit of each of his civil and military officers; with what discernment he rewarded and punished; and how in the course of a few years, he converted a mob of barbarians into one of the regular armies of Europe, in which command and obedience are best understood.

CHAPTER VI.

COMPULSION, however, was not the sole means of order, discipline, and success, which Peter employed; he borrowed from the ancients and the moderns all their most powerful stimulants; he appealed to vanity, to love of glory, and to interest, by triumphs worthy of antiquity, by decorations, titles, and promotions, and by the riches which he lavished upon those who seconded his efforts.

Often, on the very field of his victories, and with his own glorious hand, did he distribute to the ablest and bravest, either gold chains, or medals, or his portrait; then, estates, villages, towns even, and the order which he himself created, and which still bears the name of St. Andrew. Anxious that actions should have their deserved glory, he retarded the triumph of Pultava, till Scheremetef, who was ill, could assume his station; a station superior to that which he reserved for himself.

But this is not sufficient. Let us contemplate this great man in his perseverance to give the rarest of all examples. See him, from his youth to his death, devoting himself to obtain gradually, and by dint of services, the ranks of which he was the sovereign dispenser ; for it was not by commanding from the recesses of his palace, and from the elevation of his throne, and by his mere orders, that he was able to drag violently from the slough of indolence and barbaric pride, in which they delighted, so many obstinate minds, to make them abruptly enter into a new path, and to push them so forward in it, that it was thenceforth impossible for them to make a retrograde movement. No, it is not thus that genius acts ; if it commands, it commands by example ; it does not impel before it, it irresistibly draws after it. It does not say, “ Go ! ” it rushes onward, and exclaims, “ Follow me ! ”

Did they act on any other system, those great men whose efforts sufficed to change, by new laws, manners, or religions, and for a long series of ages, the condition of nations ? The boldness of their generous flight carried them out of, and in advance of, the general mass, and beyond the age in which they lived ; this constituted their glory, and justly so, as the example began by insulating him who gave it : a circumstance which implies an almost supernatural strength, men appearing to be made to live together, and to be prompted to congregate in bodies by their being conscious of their weakness.

This is what raises Peter the Great above the majority of those creators ; for we have here the most extraordinary spectacle which is to be found in all recorded time, an example without a model, a true regeneration of Muscovy, where we see the Russian autocrat himself descending from his barbaric throne to the lowest point in the scale of social order, to reascend thither by all the steps of civilization.

Not that he for a moment abandoned the sovereign authority ; but, while he descended within reach of his unpolished subjects, and made himself their model, he chose, not only for the purpose of restraining them, but also to render the example still more striking, that one of them should seem to replace him upon the throne. The object of his choice was the old and faithful Romodanovsky. This boyard was at the head of the terrible State Inquisition, which was, in truth, established by Ivan IV. ; a creation which, like most tyrannical institutions, had produced the evils which afterwards rendered it necessary.

Romodanovsky was president of the council of government ; it was he who contributed to save the state from the fury of the Strelitz. By dint of executions, he suppressed robbery, which had hitherto been carried on with impunity on the highways, and even in the streets of the capital. He was the most upright man in the empire ; but he was a Russian imbued with the ancient manners : his habits were fantastical and brutal, and his justice was ferocious. He resided in Moscow during the continual travels of the real sovereign ; Peter even decorated him with the title of Tzar, which this old and faithful servant retained during his life : he enjoyed the honours of the throne, and transmitted them to his son.

Often, in his letters and in the ceremonies, the reformer studied to seem only the subject of his subjects : he began by being nothing more than a soldier under his orders. When he had been successful at Asoph, it was only in his rank of captain of bombardiers that he passed in triumph before his throne ; at a later period, the rank of colonel, which he had asked, was refused to him, and one of his subjects was preferred.

He persevered in this system of seeming to gain slowly from this pretended Tzar, and by means of splendid actions,

all his various promotions. As the reward of the victory at Pultava, he would receive only the rank of major-general. He wished it to appear that he vanquished Charles XII. only under the orders of Mentzikof, of that humble artisan, whose merit he had formerly discovered, and whom he had raised to the rank of general-in-chief. At a subsequent epoch, after a naval engagement, in which he himself had triumphed, he obtained from the same boyard the rank of vice-admiral.

Thus it was that he moved onward to his purpose, without ever pausing, without losing sight of it, without being discouraged, and without being satisfied till he had fully attained it.

He was desirous to give his subjects the example of the forms, and of the new kind of respect which he required from them; he particularly held himself up to his nobles, as a model of submission to discipline, and to that novel hierarchy of ranks, to which merit and services were henceforth to be the passport, without any regard to antecedent privileges.

This continual simular, this unvarying spectacle of respect, submission, and discipline, which a despot gave to his people; this persevering affectation of not obtaining promotion, except successively and by services, and of thanking so respectfully the vice-tzar who represented him; in a word, this species of theatrical effect, unique in kind, has, to some persons, appeared fantastical and over-acted. But the exaggeration was in the pertinacious and arrogant grossness of manners, by which such means of reform were rendered indispensable.

And, besides, at such a distance from the place, the time, and the customs, how is it possible for us to estimate correctly the seasonableness and fit degree of that long series of sacrifices, which a great man thought it necessary

to impose on himself with such wonderful perseverance? It is to those learned foreigners who assisted him in the vast work; who had to contend with those singular manners; whose lives, hazarded amidst irritated barbarians, depended on the success of this important enterprise; it is to them that the decision ought to be referred; they alone could be the most judicious appreciators of this magnificent spectacle, of which, whatever may be the case as to the forms, the substance is undoubtedly worthy of our respect.

What is the result of an appeal to their evidence? They admired him; they tell us that such numerous efforts were barely sufficient to deprive the arrogant obstinacy of the Russian nobles of every pretext for murmurs and disobedience. They add, that to conquer the pride of those nobles, which was disgusted by their being compelled to depend on labour, merit, and gradual promotion, for the ranks which they considered as due to their birth, it was necessary incessantly to come forward and assume the office of a model.

But Peter himself opened to his nobles this laborious path; he marched, far in advance, at their head. That being the case, who was there among his subjects who could disdain to follow the sovereign in that career of arts and sciences, which he was pursuing before their eyes? What Muscovite noble could think himself degraded by treading in the footsteps of the absolute monarch of the most vast of empires, a single sign from whom could make heads fall by thousands, and who, as they had witnessed, had a heart capable of giving such a terrible signal?

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

SUCH multiplied efforts were absolutely necessary, in order to triumph at once at home and abroad, and to leave behind him an immoveable ground-work of civilization ; to lay that ground-work Peter had been obliged to create, under the form of an army, the nucleus of a new nation. With that army he was to overcome the skilful valour of the Swedes, and the barbarism of his subjects. For those two contests were concordant : the one was indispensable to the other.

This was one of those unusual circumstances, in which war, the ferocious ascendancy of the strongest, was to become, for a whole people, the direct means of civilization. In fact, how was it possible, without commerce, to civilize a barbarous people, and how could it be rendered commercial, if it were shut out from the sea, and especially the only sea within its reach which was bordered by civilized nations ? War alone, therefore, could open to it that sole path to riches and improvement. But, however eager his desires might be, Peter did not act precipitately. He did not manifest his intention till 1700, when he had taken advantage of the victories of Eugene and the Vene-

tians, to conclude a thirty years' peace with Turkey ; when he was unembarrassed by any other war, and his army was ready ; when it was but the king of Sweden, a prince who was little more than a child, whom he had to attack ; and lastly, when two powerful neighbours were in confederacy with him, to wrest from the youthful king the provinces which were in immediate contact with Russia, and which were disjoined from Sweden and discontented.

In this war, the object of Poland was to recover Livonia and Esthonia ; that of Denmark, to become master of Holstein and Sleswick ; that of Russia, to seize on Ingrim and Carelia. The right was the same on both sides. The contending powers were desirous to regain by war a possession anciently acquired by war, and of which, a century back, they had been deprived by war.

To accomplish this, seemed to require only a moment, and a trifling effort ; the struggle, however, was terrible, and it lasted for twenty-one years. In this case, as it has happened in many others, the forecast of an able policy was baffled by the rapid and vigorous bursts of genius. They astonished Peter the Great himself by their nature, which always constitutes an exception, and changes all at once the order of place, time, and distance.

Like those points in space, which contain the seeds of the most terrible tempests, but at the beginning are unperceived, and, indeed, imperceptible, so did Charles XII. suddenly start forth in formidable greatness. Denmark, taken by surprise even in her capital, was beaten down by the first stroke of this thunderbolt ; the second, seemed to disarm Russia under the walls of Narva ; the fate of Courland was decided by a third ; a fourth sufficed to rend from Saxony the turbulent Poland, which was so jealous of its privileges, and which imagined that, out of the indi-

vidual liberty possessed by multitudes, it could form a general liberty.

The storm continued; it grew more violent; a fifth bolt burst on the hereditary throne of the Saxon, and hurled him from it. Gifted as he was with such bodily strength and valour, the mind of the Saxon monarch sunk under the blow; and the iron hand of the Swede never relinquished its hold, till it had defiled his kneeling rival in that slough of meanness and treachery into which those who are unfortunate, whether sovereigns or private individuals, are but too often plunged.

The Emperor of Austria bent still lower than his vassal; it was without having fallen that he humbled himself; while he stooped, "he let," he said, "the hurricane pass over;" thus affording another example of the pliant perseverance of the Austrian policy, which is patient even to resignation, and which willingly sacrifices every thing to time, because it is from time that it expects every thing.

At Narva, meanwhile, the flower of the Russian troops, to the number of thirty-two thousand, and attacked by eight thousand Swedes, had been taken, disarmed, and destroyed. The Tzar was absent at the time. This terrible and unexpected blow did not confound him. The revolt of Astracan, which was occasioned by the new form of dress, and by the son of one of the Strelitz who had been executed at Moscow, was shortly after added to his embarrassments. This conflagration could be smothered only by Scheremetef, the best of his generals; but no obstacle could stop the reformer in his course. He had but one end in view, from which nothing turned him aside, to which he made every thing subservient, and to which he brought back and sacrificed every thing. He pursued it without pausing, amidst this terrible war and the insurrec-

tions of his empire. In that empire it was absolutely necessary to annihilate the old mode of thinking, with its train of habits and manners, and to substitute a new one; and, during the transition from the one to the other, to sustain, like Atlas, and with his unaided strength, a shaking world; this burthen he undertook to bear. Amidst the perturbation of a great defeat, as well as in the ecstasy of victory, he proceeded with unaltered pace: he founded institutions, he began undertakings of all kinds in all quarters, without either success or defeat diverting him from his purpose, or one creation making him forgetful of another.

At the same time that he was personally engaged in raising fresh troops for the army which had been destroyed before Narva, in disciplining them, in selecting those who were fit to head the remainder, and in converting into cannon the bells of his churches, he hastened into Samogitia, and to Smolensk, to hold out a helping hand to tottering Poland. He offered to its sovereign a subsidy of twenty-five thousand pounds, and the assistance of twenty thousand Russians, on the sole condition of his instructing and civilizing them. He subdued his clergy, and his nobility, and changed their manners by laws and by examples; and he regulated the forms of contracts, in which, hitherto, the parties had, in general, been designated only by by-names. He founded colleges; he established woollen manufactories; the activity of his genius, which extended to every thing, endeavoured to naturalize Saxon sheep in Russia; he invited vine-dressers from the remotest parts of Spain; and, lastly, he lured from all quarters artists, workers in metal, and artificers of all kinds, and thus emancipated his empire, which, till now, had been tributary to Europe for even its most trifling metallic instruments.

Charles was not less active; both were equally persevering, but with diametrically opposite ends in view; the one looked to utility, the other to vain glory; so that the efforts which strengthened the one, enfeebled the other.

Charles, who seemed not to be aware that a leader risks as much by despising as being despised, traversed, for eight years, Poland and Saxony, where his presence was useless, while he left to his lieutenants the task of defending his own states, those ports of Ingria and Carelia, against which all the efforts of Peter the Great were directed. He acted like a man who scorned his enemy; the Tzar, like a man who esteemed him, kept an observant eye upon him, directed his own troops by the light which flashed from the arms of his rival, and endeavoured, at the expense of this great master in the art of war, to profit by the lessons which he received from him.

Accordingly, early in the contest, Scheremetef, Mentzickoff, and Peter himself, were several times victorious. Dorpt and Narva were taken almost at once; and by the exertions of the Tzar, who hastened from the one to the other, to direct the labours of the engineers and of the artillery. At the sacking of Narva, it was only by killing several of his soldiers with his own sword that he succeeded in saving the town from their violence; but his own violence he was not able to control. At sight of Count de Horn, the governor, who was brought to him a prisoner, he darted forward, struck him in the face, and exclaimed, "It is you, and you only, who are the cause of so many calamities! Ought you not to have capitulated, when you had no hope of assistance?"* Then, throwing his sword on the table, "Look at that blood," added he; "it is not Swedish, but Russian; that sword has saved the unfortunate inhabitants, who were sacrificed by your obstinacy."

* Stœhlin.

CHAPTER II.

INGRIA, meanwhile, was conquered, Livonia and Courland were invaded, and twelve thousand Swedes were prisoners. The Tzar made these victories widely known, and rewarded the victors liberally ; but, far from being dazzled by them, he contented himself with exclaiming, " Thank Heaven ! we have at last succeeded in beating the Swedes when we were two to one ; let us hope that we shall one day be able to beat them with equal numbers." When Scheremetef experienced a defeat, he wrote to him, " Do not allow yourself to be dispirited by it ; constant prosperity renders men vain." If, at length, he suffered his joy to manifest itself, by stimulating, with triumphal shows, the patriotic pride of his people, it was, (as in the case of the conquest of the fortress and sea of Asoph,) when, in the second year of the war he made himself master of a town upon the Neva, to which he gave the name of Schlusselfurg, or the key of the Baltic. Every where else this prince exposed his person only on great occasions ; but he became as rash as a buccaneer whenever an effort was to be made to open for his states an outlet to that sea. In fact, in the ensuing campaign, we see him with the rudder in the one hand, and the sword in the other, descending the Neva, passing under the fire of Nientschanz, and with his barks carrying the Swedish fleet by boarding : no sooner has he accomplished this, than the Gulf is reconnoitred, and, without waiting to disencumber himself of his arms, Peter takes up the compass and the sounding lead, and decides that a desert island, an uninha-

bitable marsh, shall be Petersburg. He himself chooses the spot, and traces the plan of the fort by which it is to be defended.

The efforts which the generals of Charles made to destroy this creation were multiplied in vain; it was guarded by the genius of Peter; and a numerous population was attracted to it. A hundred thousand men perished in laying its pestilential foundations, and yet the founder did not think that he had bought too dearly this point of contact with the commerce, sciences, and arts of Europe. At no distant period the canal of the Twer and the Msta united the waters of its port with those of the Caspian sea. The city, the harbour, and its fleet, all sprang up at once, and as if by enchantment; and this arose from the counsel, the order, the execution, in a word, every thing, depending only on this one man, who was, at the same time, general, naval officer, engineer, and absolute monarch.

At the same time, and for eight whole years, by subsidies, and by reinforcements which he himself often led into Poland, he kept alive the contest between his Saxon ally and the Swedish hero; for, either in consequence of the dexterous management of the Tzar, or that good luck has a part even in the best deserved success of mortals, it happened, fortunately for Russia, that, during the first eight years of the war, Charles XII. chose for the theatre of his glory, a spot four hundred leagues distant from that which Peter the Great had chosen for the theatre of his own.

But in Saxony as in Poland, every thing was at length beaten down under the sword of the Swedes. It was then that, to his natural pride, Charles XII. added that of victory; the fatal presumption, the intoxication of the victorious, which is the ordinary effect of the homage and the submission that are lavished upon them.

His contempt of the Russians was increased by the prudence of the Tzar, who offered him peace. "He would sign it," he said, "only in Moscow." Peter, without being at all disconcerted, replied, "My brother Charles wishes to play the part of Alexander; but he will not find a Darius in me!" And he immediately proved it, by traversing not only his empire, but also the whole of Lithuania, and preparing every thing for an obstinate defence.

Charles, meanwhile, who was swollen with arrogance by the success at Narva, divided, by anticipation, the dignities of the Russian empire among his officers. "His whip," he said, "would be sufficient to drive this Muscovite rabble before him, not only out of Moscow, but from the world." *

He at length deigned to march in person against these vanquished enemies. At Grodno, a fortunate bold stroke increased his confidence. As he proceeded onward, an obstinate and sanguinary contest† at the passing of a river, instead of moderating, inflamed his ardour. Beyond Mohilef, after his entrance upon the territory of old Russia, a check which Golitzin gave to his advanced guard irritated him; he exposed his person; and a surprise by a partisan corps, in which he was very near falling under the lances of the Cossacks, did not open his eyes. It seems as though the excess of power which he had enjoyed at Dresden had weakened his judgment; that he was blinded by the still smoking blood of Patkul; and that, having made a god of himself, the true God had deserted him.

At last, when Moscow began to tremble, when Sweden hoped that her purpose was on the eve of being accom-

* See Leclerc.

† Combat of the Bibitch against Scheremetef, Repnin, and Mentzikof, (14 July, 1708.)

plished, he disappointed the fears of his enemies, and the hopes of his own people; this haughty warrior, whose blows hitherto had always been aimed at the heart, now turned aside towards the south on the faith of a nomadic chieftain; he abandoned his reinforcements, to wander at a distance in boundless deserts, without guide, without support, and as if hurried away by a fatality.

Let it not be supposed that the joy which he felt, on witnessing this un hoped-for movement, induced Peter to come into hasty and imprudent collision with the victorious intoxication of the Swede, who was thus going astray. He had no other allies than the faults of his adversary; but he knew that they were the surest and the most useful of all allies: they were enough for him, and he allowed them to come fully into play. He waited till they had delivered over his rival to the deserts, to famine, to approaching winter; and then he added himself to those scourges. But all his blows were deliberately calculated; he had recently left open to the conqueror of Poland the road to the southern deserts of his empire, but, not less enterprising when needful than he had lately been circumspect, he now determined to conquer or die, in order to bar the passage, at Lesno, of a second Swedish army, which was advancing to reinforce the first; and with this determination, he ordered the Russians of his reserve "to kill every Muscovite who should give way, himself not excepted." With only twelve thousand troops, he triumphed, after an obstinate combat of three days. His victory was complete. Levenhaupt and his sixteen thousand Swedes were almost entirely destroyed; provisions, cannon, the military chest, in short every thing, became the prize of the victor.

In consequence of this daring stroke, Charles remained insulated. Then, from his lofty sphere, forming a comprehensive judgment with respect to time and place, and

men, the Tzar decided the epoch and the spot for his terminating in person, at a future period, this gigantic contest. The obstinacy of the Swedes, which was so inflexible and immovable that it seemed corporeal, he, for the present, left to contend with his lieutenants and with all the scourges combined against it, while he himself returned to the heart of his empire. There, he repressed the Tartars, and calmly continued to call into life the creations of all the arts of peace, in the midst of a terrible war, and while waiting the near approach of the moment when he was to strike his most decisive blow.

At length, at Pultava, victory crowned the labours of the warrior-legislator. On that field of glory, "I hail you," said he to his soldiers,* "I hail you, dearest children of my heart! you whom I have formed by the sweat of my brow! you, the children of your country, and who are as indispensable to her as the soul is to the body which it animates!"

He then offered up his thanksgiving to the God of armies, who doubtless was on his side; that mighty God to whom all things are at once existent, and who beheld him triumphing not far from those fatal banks of the Pruth, to which this victorious Tzar was to return, that he might fall into the hands of a Tartar and of a Turk, in consequence of his placing the same confidence in the good faith of a barbarian, and manifesting a contempt of his enemy similar to that by which he had now profited.

This was a transient but it was a fertile error, as all errors in war and policy are; it retarded the southern greatness of Russia, and compelled Peter the Great to ransom himself by lavishing gold, and by making the sacrifice of Asoph and its establishments, which were the fruit of so much toil, and blood, and treasure.

* Life of Mentzikof. Age of Peter the Great.

CHAPTER III.

IN the interim, between the glory of Pultava and this misfortune on the Pruth, in the short space of two years, what numerous labours and events had occurred, which, with other men, a century could scarcely have contained! What, then, is time, but an additional symptom of our weakness! And by this excessive rapidity, this almost simultaneousness of events, which the genius of one man was able to produce, how well are we enabled to conceive that, in the sight of the Genius of the universe, all things may have a contemporary existence!

No sooner was Charles XII. overthrown, than the Tzar personally hastened to complete, by his negotiations and his arms, in Poland, in Prussia, with Denmark, at Riga, at Petersburgh, and at Moscow, the victory which he had achieved at Pultava. Stanislaus submitted; Poland was restored to the Elector of Saxony; the strength of the Tzar's mind made allowance for the weakness of Augustus; he did not reproach him, and he remedied his misfortune. He, however, declared, that, as none of his allies had assisted him in his conquests, all previous treaties were void, and he would share his acquisitions with no one.

In the same manner that he had filled the office of his own negotiator, he became general and bombardier before Riga, engineer and shipbuilder at Petersburgh, and a ruler, and potent prince, acknowledged as emperor by England, at Moscow; the patriotic pride of which city he swelled by the exhibition of a third triumph.

In the preparations for it he himself bore a part. But

soon, proving himself greater than in this triumph, after having excited the hopes and the courage of his people by the spectacle of the elevation of the victors and the humiliation of the vanquished, he gave a kind welcome to the misfortunes of the latter, paid honour to civilization in their persons, received them at his table, and took them into his service ; and if, at a later period, he treated them with more rigour, it was not till he deemed it necessary to exercise upon them a strictly just retaliation.

At the same time, he fixed the amount of his army at thirty-three regiments of infantry, twenty-four of cavalry, and fifty-eight thousand men in garrison. He regulated the expenditure of it ; and in order to avoid the charges arising from discount and the transmission of specie, he made a distribution of the forces, and assigned the payment of these bodies to the different provinces of his empire.

These triumphal festivals, and these arrangements, were still going on, when he re-appeared at a distance of two hundred and fifty leagues, before Wiborg : that capital was compelled to surrender. Here it was that, as a retaliatory measure, and for the first time, he violated his word ; not perceiving that by this step he did more injury to himself than to his enemy. It is true that he made some atonement for his error, by softening, in many ways, the captivity of a garrison which he unjustly detained as prisoners.

At length, the four Swedish maritime provinces, on the frontier of Russia, were conquered. And still the inflexible pride of Charles XII., who was a fugitive in Turkey, obstinately persisted in refusing to return to Europe, till after he had armed the Sultan against the Tzar, and seen his conqueror capitulate, not far from the spot which had been the witness of his own defeat.

In the mean while, Peter the Great, who had converted Mentzikoff, the son of a peasant, into a prince, and a general-in-chief covered with glory ; and who had changed a rude, coarse, and savage state, into a powerful and victorious empire ; had also made another change : Catherine, a captive servant, whom he made his mistress, and who had for ten years been the assiduous companion of his labours, he had transformed into an acknowledged tzarina, worthy of partaking them, and even of continuing them after his decease.

It was thus that, in all manners, he played the part of a creator ; as far, at least, as human weakness will permit ; or, rather, perhaps, it should be said, that he transmuted ; and that before his eyes every prejudice, every vanity, sunk down and was effaced. The most worthy, whatever might be their birth, seemed to him to be the fittest instruments, and the best disposed, to assist him in that national regeneration, which was the sole object of his entire existence.

And why should an absolute sovereign, who, to enlighten his people, had been capable of descending from all the splendour of the throne to the workshop of the humble artificer, why should he have feared to raise to empire a daughter of one of the people ? Besides, this kind of unequal marriage excited no astonishment in a country where, according to an Asiatic custom, the Grand-Princes had often chosen their wives from among their assembled female subjects.

The choice was soon justified by the event ; only four months had elapsed after Peter the Great had caused to be recognised as sovereign this offspring of the people, when that people, his army, and himself, were saved on the Pruth by her courage.

The pertinacity of Charles XII. had been successful.

Two large Turkish and Tartar armies marched along the banks of that river to overwhelm his rival; deceived by two Greeks, who reciprocally betrayed each other, Peter was on the point of exposing himself to the combined operations of those armies. Cantemir, hospodar of Moldavia, one of the Greeks, offered him the two principalities, and wished to secure for himself alone, the reward of a plot which was excusable in a Greek against a Turk. Brancovan, the other, who was hospodar of Wallachia, at first took part in this revolt; he sold himself to Peter the Great; then, doubly a traitor, selling himself again to Turkey, he put into its hands his first corrupter and his army. The hope of this miscreant was to obtain from the Sultan the two principalities, which Cantemir persisted in expecting only from the Tzar.

It was here, in the deserts through which the Pruth flows, that, caught in the snare, twenty thousand warriors, the flower of Russia, the precious germ of its civilization, after several days of marches, counter-marches, and combats, without water, without provisions, with no other ammunition than three rounds for their cannon and musketry,* found themselves encircled by two hundred and fifty thousand Turks and Tartars, and reduced to the necessity of either perishing or surrendering.

The last day which seemed to be allotted to the existence of renovated Russia had now closed; Peter had lost all hope; and, feeling himself attacked by those nervous convulsions which were the consequences of the excesses and fears of his youth, he avoided every eye, and hid in the seclusion of his tent the double anguish which oppressed him. But let not envy prematurely exult; however depressed that great man might be, all that issued from that

* See Bruce.

tent was still to bear the stamp of greatness. This severe adversity was all that was wanting to the glory of Peter: it seems as though, by momentarily divesting him of his omnipotence, it had stripped him naked, as in single combat, to show him more powerful in his native strength, and rising still superior to such an overwhelming weight of misfortune.

In fact, even in this utter extremity, no debasement of mind appeared in any part of his conduct. Though he was convinced that no resource was left, he gave directions to prepare for a desperate and final effort, and at the same time penned this admirable command to his senate, "Not to lose courage; to think of nothing but the welfare and safety of the state, without paying the slightest respect to any orders whatever which might be extorted from his captivity; but even, should the public good require it, to place the most worthy among them on the throne; thus beforehand, and while he was yet free, voluntarily abdicating an empire over which he had been desirous to reign that he might insure its happiness."*

But a chance of safety now offered itself. In this extreme danger, Catherine was the only person who did not despair. She alone, in spite of the most threatening prohibition, ventured to penetrate into the tent of the Tzar; and she, in a manner, extorted his permission to negotiate with the vizier for peace, which it seemed highly improbable that he would grant, but which she, nevertheless, succeeded in obtaining. The determined firmness which the Russians displayed, gave weight to the proposal; and the principal conditions were already settled, when the Tzar was again reduced to the alternative of perishing with his whole army, and along with them, the cherished civilization of his people, or of paying to the victorious Turk

* See, *The Age of Peter the Great.*

and Tartar a small tribute, and delivering into their hands the fugitive Cántemir, who was the cause of his distress."

It was to the sovereign of a country in which the very name of honour was said to be unknown, that this alternative was proposed. Let those who love to hear the voice of true glory, whatever may be the language in which she speaks, listen to the reply of the Tzar, "I would rather cede to the Turks all the territory between this and Kursk; I should have the hope of some day recovering it; but my broken faith would be irreparable; I cannot violate my promise: honour is the only thing that is peculiarly ours; and to renounce it, is to cease to be a monarch!" Thus, in his turn, this great man gave to his European masters an example of which they stood in need, and which, undoubtedly, was of a far higher character than all those which he had received from them.

Taganrock, Asoph, the Black Sea, his fleets, his ports, and his dock-yards, were, however, either abandoned or given up to the victorious Turk. But, as at the period of the defeat of Narva, this terrible event, and the enormous sacrifices which it occasioned, did not shake the genius of the Tzar. Though his brightness was transiently obscured, he still moved steadily onward to his wonted purpose. It was with the same view, with the design of securing to his subjects an outlet on a civilized sea, that he completed the downfall of the Swedish party in Poland,* from which country he did not even require a compensation; and that he drove Steinbock from the Germanic empire,† took prisoners that general and his army, compelled Dantzick‡ to ransom itself, made himself master of Stettin, conquered Finland, and passed his galleys over an isthmus of eleven hundred and fifty fathoms in breadth. Erenschild, the

* 1712.

† 1713.

‡ 1714.

Swedish admiral, who was master of the sea, beheld a hostile fleet suddenly appear in the midst of his own; the Russian vessels carried his men of war by boarding, after an obstinate action, in which Peter proved himself at once the bravest soldier of his army, the most experienced pilot of his squadron, and its most skilful admiral.

Finally, when, as he was returning homeward, a storm arose, which threatened to swallow up together the victors and the vanquished, he devoted his person to avert the danger; he threw himself into a boat on a tumultuous sea, amidst deep darkness and innumerable reefs, contended with the tempest during a passage of two sea leagues, reached a port, lighted a beacon, and thus saved the whole of his victory. Petersburg then witnessed another triumphal procession. Peter was present in it only as a rear-admiral, in which rank he had fought; he was seen passing in the crowd, in the presence of Romanodovsky, and submitting to lay publicly before him the report of the engagement, and to reply to all his questions. In the same manner, and with all the forms of respect, he received from him the rank of vice-admiral, which Apraxin had asked for him; he then returned his thanks to that general, in a letter which was remarkable, because it was evidently intended to serve as a model to his subjects.

Then, resuming the Tzar, "Friends," said he to the Russians who surrounded him, "which of you, only thirty years ago, would ever have thought that a day would come when you and I should build vessels on the Baltic; when we should found a city in that country, conquered by our toils and our valour, and should see so many Russians become victorious soldiers and skilful sailors? Could you possibly have foreseen that such a multitude of highly instructed men, of industrious artificers, of distinguished artists, would come from various parts of

Europe, to make the arts flourish in our native land ; that we should impress foreign powers with such respect for us ; in one word, that so much glory was destined for us ?

“ History shows us, that Greece was anciently the asylum of all the sciences ; and that, driven from that beautiful country by the revolutions of the times, they spread over Italy, and thence into all the nations of Europe. It was in consequence of the negligence of our ancestors that they stopped short in Poland, and could not reach us ; but at one time the Germans and Poles were plunged into the same darkness of ignorance in which we languished till a recent period. It was by the exertions of their sovereigns that their eyes were opened ; they have inherited the sciences, the polity, and the arts of Greece.

“ Our turn is at last come, if you will second me in my undertaking, if you will add labour to obedience. The transmigration of the sciences and arts may be compared to the circulation of the blood. I hope that the hour will come when, abandoning Germany, France, and England, they will remain some time with us, in their way to Greece, their country.”*

CHAPTER IV.

MEANWHILE, in 1716, Charles XII., who had at length returned to his states, still persisted in refusing to allow the Russians an entrance into the Baltic sea, that sea which the Tzar now traversed as master, at the head of the combined squadrons of all the northern powers, which gloried in sailing under his orders.

* See the German Resident, Leclerc, Voltaire, Levesque.

But, at length, the obstinacy of the most rash adventurer that ever reigned was turned aside by the most intriguing of ministers, and its object was changed.

Goertz was become the adviser of Charles XII. ; he had gained the ascendancy over that inflexible spirit. He was desirous to unite the two heroes of the North, for the purpose of restoring Pomerania to Sweden, and Poland to Stanislaus, and dethroning George I. in England, while, by a conspiracy against the Duke of Orleans, Alberoni should give to Spain the regency of France.

It was at this period, particularly, that Peter the Great proved how steadily he adhered to his only purpose, that of regenerating his people, the accomplishment of which his wars and conquests were merely designed to promote.

This victor, who seems to have been ardent only for the interest of his country, and whom the glory of arms could not carry beyond that point, felt no repugnance to being reconciled with his vanquished enemy. Then, almost immediately availing himself of this first moment of relaxation, afforded by the absurd intrigues in which Goertz involved and debased his rival, Peter hastened into Denmark, whence he proceeded to Holland. In the latter country he, for three months, studied the politics of Europe, and the progress of arts and sciences ; and he visited the house of the ship-builder with whom he had originally resided. His plain and open-hearted manners, which are so natural to genius, might almost have induced that family to imagine that, in this glorious and potent emperor, seated at their table with his wife, they saw nothing more than a former journeyman carpenter, who had risen to be a master like themselves.

But this was not enough ; Holland did not afford sufficient scope to his regenerative genius ; it was in the metropolis of all kinds of glory, in the centre of civilization,

that he was desirous to form an estimate of its full effects. Astonished Paris beheld and admired him ; in that city, which the great age had raised to such an elevation, Peter still appeared a Colossus.

At all times full of enthusiasm for the possessors of high renown, even when they are foreigners, Paris lavished its homage upon him. But, from the moment of his arrival, all these vain pomps were rejected by the Tzar ; they hid from him the useful things which he wished to observe.* “ I am a soldier,” replied he, “ bread and beer are all I want ; I like small rooms better than large. I do not wish to move about in state, and to tire so many people.”

Meanwhile his character was closely studied by that clear-sighted, witty, and satirical Court. Listen to its own words. “ His deportment is full of dignity and confidence, as becomes an absolute master ; he has large and bright eyes, with a penetrating and occasionally stern glance. His motions, which are abrupt and hasty, betray the violence of his passions and the impetuosity of his disposition ; his orders succeed each other rapidly and imperiously. He dismisses with a word, with a sign, without allowing himself to be thwarted by time, place, or circumstance, and now and then forgetting even the rules of decorum ; yet, with the Regent and the young King, he maintained his state, and regulated all his movements according to the points of a strict and proud etiquette.

“ For the rest,” according to Louville, “ the court discovered in him more great qualities than bad ones ; it considered his faults to be merely trivial and superficial. It remarked that he was usually sober, and only now and then gave way to excessive intemperance ; that, regular in

* See Buchet, Voltaire, Leclerc, Levesque, Duclos, Stœhlin, the Traveller, the Resident, &c. and especially, Louville.

his habits of living, he daily went to bed at nine o'clock, and rose at four, and was never for a moment unemployed; and, accordingly, that he was well-informed, and seemed to have a better knowledge of naval affairs and fortification than any man in France." Then, with the boldness of an enlightened contemporary, who has no fear of being contradicted by fame, the same Court adds, "A Prince, besides, who was very sincere, and whose promises and treaties were inviolable; capable of esteeming his enemies, manifesting an extraordinary veneration for Charles XII. and Louis XIV. and a warm attachment to Catherine, though he was unfaithful to her."

Finally, as in so great a man every thing was deemed worthy of notice, the Court also observed, that "he displayed little gallantry towards women, and little polish in his exterior, but that his mind was highly polished; that he was singularly affable in private life, and very stately in public; that he knew France and its principal subjects as if he had been brought up there; that, penurious with respect to useless things, he loved the arts, detested luxurious extravagance, and exclaimed, 'that he grieved for France and its infant King, and believed the latter to be on the point of losing his kingdom through luxury and superfluities.' "

Others, on various occasions, long continued to be astonished at his extreme indulgence in all kinds of debauchery, though he took some pains to conceal it. Little used to the habits of the natives of the north, his repasts, even his daily ones, appeared to them to be excesses. But at the same time, they remarked the graciousness with which he received individuals, the pertinence of his questions, his flattering language to the Marshal de Villars, and the marked attention which he paid to many officers, with all whose memorable actions he was well acquainted.

They described how noble, frank, and affectionate, was his simplicity of manners towards the young King of France ; and what gratitude he manifested for French urbanity, which, whenever he showed himself, multiplied, as by enchantment, the portraits of himself and of Catherine. They admired the experienced glance and skilful hand with which he selected the objects worthy of his attention, and the masters whom he engaged to instruct his people ; and his preference of the useful arts and sciences, to examine which he repeatedly visited the artists and manufacturers whose merit he had discerned. “ His questions to learned men and to artists,” say they, “ uniformly gave proof of his knowledge, and excited admiration of the sagacity of an enlarged mind, which was as prompt to comprehend information, as it was eager to learn.”*

Accordingly, in his rapid journey through France, he was seen to stop, quit his carriage, and stray into the fields to converse with common husbandmen. Not content with making them explain the use of their agricultural implements, he himself took sketches of those implements. The dress of one of them having attracted his notice, he stopped again, went to him, interrogated him, and then, turning to his followers, “ Look,” he said, “ at this good country parson ; with the labour of his own hands he procures cider, wine, and money to boot. Remind me of this when we are in Russia again. I will endeavour to stimulate our priests by this example, and, by teaching them to till the soil, rescue them from their wretchedness and indolence.” He then entered this memorandum in his notebook, which was crowded with remarks full of good sense, knowledge, and ingenious ideas, on every thing which he deemed it advisable to attempt for the well being of his empire.

* See Fontenelle, Louville, Duclos, &c.

In the meanwhile, his son, the heir of his throne, had taken advantage of his absence to rebel against civilization by flying from it, as the strelitz had formerly done by attacking it; and the termination of this second journey of the Tzar was to be more deeply stained with blood than his first return had been. The priests were the primary cause of this revolt, the germ of which was eventually to be extirpated only by an iron hand. Then, at length, was explained to the Russians, and to the astonishment of the French, the churlish and stern silence of the Tzar before the bed of the intolerant and superstitious widow of Louis XIV. and his fierce rapture at the tomb of Richelieu, when he exclaimed, "Great man! I would have given you one of half of my states for teaching me to govern the other!" As if, by this singular exclamation, he had meant to invoke that genius of order obtained by means of despotism, to add his sanguinary and machiavelian inflexibility to that of the speaker, in aid of the terrible blow which the latter was meditating.

But let us turn away our eyes from that fatal episode, and, in the immense and rugged career of the reformer, let us first follow to the conclusion the trace of his warlike footsteps. His struggle with Sweden had already lasted eighteen years. For three years longer it was to stain the Baltic with blood. The negotiations of Goertz had slackened hostilities without suspending them. On the death of Charles XII., in 1718, the dying fire of war again revived: it shot forth a last and splendid blaze, by the light of which all the greatness of the Tzar's genius again became manifest. Charles XII. being killed, Peter remained the sole object of the restless jealousy of the northern powers; with Sweden, which they looked upon as sufficiently weakened, they now combined, to weaken the Tzar in his turn. Thus, as it sometimes happens in these

important contests, at the close of this sanguinary contest, the victory would have remained in the hands of the lookers-on.

But, in all his triumphs, he had kept his eye fixed only upon their result; to preserve that, he did not fear to break with Austria, Poland, Denmark, and even with England, whose envious policy began to dread him. The equal already of all his masters, he refused their treacherous mediation, and replied to their hostile measures by reprisals; and when the successor of Charles XII. whom they supported, still strove to wrest from him that port on the Baltic which was the sole reward of eighteen years' efforts, he redoubled those efforts. It was in spite of their threats, in the face of their united squadrons, that, invariable in the pursuit of one object, which, in his eyes, neither successes nor reverses could aggrandize or depreciate, he completed the conquest of Finland, invaded Bothnia, refused any suspension of arms, and pushed his soldiers, whom he called *his plenipotentiaries*, as far as the gates of Stockholm, which capital they shook, and where they at length extorted a peace more glorious than he had hoped to attain.*

For this prince, who made war so well, who had given such strength to his nation, and who was indebted to that art and to his valour for so many provinces and so much glory, preferred peace to it. In his hand, that scourge of order, of civilization, and of the welfare of the people, became the most powerful means of organization, of instruction, and of national riches. As soon as, by the possession of Petersburgh,† he conceived that he had secured all those benefits, he seized upon every occasion of laying down his arms; on the eve of his triumph at Pultava, he, for the second time, offered

* 1721.

† 1703.

peace to the enemy who had threatened him in his capital, and whom he had now surrounded. He only required from him the cession of that port on the Baltic which was already conquered and fortified. On the morrow after his victory, his steady eye pierced, undazzled, beyond the splendid glory which his arms had acquired ; he still fixed it on the sole object of his first efforts, the original motive of this important war : he wrote to Apraxin, “ Thanks be to God, the foundation-stone of Petersburg is now solidly laid. I believe that we shall continue masters of that place, and of the territory belonging to it :” and again he solicited peace from the rival whom he had just overthrown. Twelve years later, in 1721, after twenty-one years of toils, of dangers, and of victories, when at length it was concluded at Nystadt, and gave to him Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, a part of Carelia and of Finland, with several islands, leaving him with a formidable army, and reputation, the name of father of his country, which was bestowed on him by his senate, and the title of emperor, which Europe confirmed, he exclaimed to Munnich, in the transports of his joy, “ that if the Swedes had let him be the arbiter of peace, it would have been much less disadvantageous to them ;” and he again repeated, that “ his utmost hopes had only extended to the possession of a port on the Baltic.” *

The year after, however, he resumed his arms, but it was for the last time. His military life was occupied by four wars ; one against Sweden, two against Turkey, and the fourth against Persia. Three were aggressive and fortunate ; one (that of the Pruth), was defensive and unfortunate. All had the same purpose—that of acquiring or preserving outlets on the three surrounding seas. By the

* See Munnich, *The Age of Peter the Great*, Stœhlin, *The Traveller*, &c. &c.

first contest with the Turks, he almost opened to himself the Black Sea, which a second war made him lose; the third rendered him master of the Baltic; and the fourth gave to him the Caspian, on which the Russian commerce had been insulted.

In that war against the revolted subjects of the Shah of Persia, or rather in that military march of twelve months, undertaken to avenge, secure, and extend the Russian commerce in Asia, Peter acquired three maritime provinces; and he ably avoided a rupture with Turkey, which was jealous of this aggrandizement: a premature conquest, but which it was necessary to dispute with the Turks, and with reference to which, when prince Cantemir congratulated him on it, he gave this remarkable answer: "You are mistaken as to the real interests of Russia; she has more than enough of land, it is only water that she wants." *

CHAPTER V.

THUS, greater than his empire, he filled it, extended it in all quarters, and opened to the industry of his subjects an immensity of sea and land. For it was he who, at an early period of his reign, commenced the commerce of his subjects with China; subsequently, though it seemed as if the principal object of his efforts must necessarily turn all his attention towards Europe, he did not neglect this directly opposite point of view. His negotiations renewed the connection which was perpetually broken by barbarism and dishonesty; his justice protected his subjects against

* See the Traveller for Thirteen years.

his own officers ; and several nobles were beheaded for having levied contributions on the caravans. From the midst of the Baltic, where he was treating and combating with Europe, he carried on other negotiations, by which he constantly sought to shorten the distance traversed by his subjects who traded with China, and, endeavoured, by the route of the Caspian and Great and Little Bucharía, to render accessible to them the commerce of India.

But it was on Petersburg that his mightiest efforts were concentrated. It was not enough for him to have opened this new road to activity and industry ; it was necessary for him to push into it his astonished subjects, in spite of their contrary habits and manners. For this reason it was, that he covered his seas, his lakes, and even his rivers, with vessels of every kind, which he demanded from all classes of the rich. He was resolved that his subjects should thus be made pilots and sailors. It was also with this purpose, of rendering maritime the inland people whom he had transferred to Petersburg, that he did not throw a bridge over the Neva. He determined that the new inhabitants of its banks should cross that dangerous river only in sailing-boats, the art of guiding which would, he knew, soon be acquired by them, when their lives were at stake.

Nor did he listen to the complaints of all his other provinces, with respect to the remoteness of the situation, which he had chosen for his capital : a ruinous distance, which could not fail to occasion an excessive tardiness in all administrative and judicial communications.

It was equally in vain that his boyards urged their objections to the barren and swampy soil, to the inclement climate, in which winter reigned for eight months of the year, where rye was an article of garden culture, and a bee-hive a curiosity ; to the Neva, which was a mass of ice

for four whole months, and of such unequal depth, that ships of war launched at Petersburg could not descend it without the aid of machines to float them over the shoals, nor merchant-vessels ascend without being towed; and, lastly, to the port, capable, indeed, of containing three hundred sail, but from which the egress, impeded by sands and rocks, is so beset by dangers, that there is no possibility of accomplishing it except with certain favourable winds.

Peter set at nought all these serious inconveniences, nor did he take more heed of the freshness of the water, which spread rapid decay in his ships, nor of that solitary tree on which experience had marked the height of the last inundation, and which he ordered to be cut down. Prophesying the future from the past, that irksome witness showed clearly to every age, that a storm of some hours duration from the west, by driving back the waters of the Neva, would be sufficient to swallow up the new city, which was built upon piles in a bottomless marsh.

Since, however, he was thus obstinately determined to choose for his capital a spot so removed from the rest of his dominions, why did he not prefer the eminences which were in its immediate neighbourhood? The palaces, and most of the public establishments, might have been built there, out of the reach of danger; and, if the passion of the Tzar for imitating Holland, his first instructor, was so strong that, at all risks, he must have something like that country, it was in his power to extend this upper city to the river, by adding a lower city, in which he might have given a copy of Amsterdam and its commercial streets, consisting of canals between a double quay.

But, when placed in competition with the grand conception of the Tzar, which included the world in its scope, every thing must give way. These obstacles appeared to

him to be nothing more than minor impediments. The three most important quarters of the globe, Europe, Asia, and America, converge towards the North Pole, or seem to have their roots in it. Russia, situated at the point where the meridians unite, participates of all three, or, at least, touches on them, and seems to be their origin. This gigantic whole Peter had attentively considered; and he formed the vast plan of taking advantage of its geographical position, and deriving from it all possible benefit. The Russian empire which, till then, had in a manner been banished to the extremity of Europe, and of which Europe had but little knowledge, he was desirous to render the state, of all others, most closely and directly connected with the three richest or most civilized quarters of the world.

Let it not be said, that to men of genius, as to the rich, we delight in lending. Did he not, from the beginning to the end of his reign, endeavour, by negotiations and conquests, to draw Russia closer to Persia, and even to India and to China? Did he not twice cause to be explored the point where Northern Asia approaches to America? It was according to instructions drawn up with his own hand by this great man, that Behring attempted the famous passage to which he gave his name. By his conquests by land, by sea, and over man, the Tzar thus wished to give to his states the enjoyment of three worlds. It was by means of the rivers, lakes, and seas, which intersected or crowded his empire, and of canals and caravans, that he endeavoured to establish these extensive lines of communication. It was amidst the marshes of the Neva, at the extremity of the Gulf of Finland, that his eagle eye discovered the connecting point of this vast whole, the link by which every part of it was united. This port, on the Baltic, is the nearest to the Volga, that main artery of

the Russian colossus. Here the waters of Europe might be joined to those of Asia, and, perhaps, without difficulty, to those of the White and Frozen seas, and even those of America.

The choice made by the Tzar is thus proved to have been the result of reflection. It did not spring from the transport inspired by the first possession of that which he had so much desired, nor from the eagerness and precipitancy which a young conqueror felt to enjoy his conquest. Other ports have been tried. Revel is one of them, but it is not sufficiently safe ; at Rogerwick, Nature has been contended against by immense works, but in vain, for she has been victorious. This was the reason why so many efforts, so many sacrifices, were lavished on Petersburg, and why he made every thing subservient to that creation. Thither riches, commerce, nobles, the people, the centre of government, in a word, every thing, was attracted, summoned, hurried away, and fixed. Far from growing weaker, his determination continued to acquire strength. He took especial care not to let one of his great establishments be at a distance from those fetid swamps. Palaces were necessary there to establish and preserve cottages ; and senators, nobles of his court, and he himself, to fix traders and sailors to the spot. All the seductions, all the attractions of power, were required there, to change an inland into a maritime people ; to retain in a repulsive situation men of repugnant manners, contrary habits, and hostile prejudices ; and to make them persist in a long, obscure, and deadly struggle with elements which were less rebellious than themselves.

Accordingly, it was on this nearest point to the civilization, and consequently to the commerce of Europe, that he established his abode, not by a palace, as Mentzikof

had done, but by the institutions and foundations of public utility which belong to a great capital. The infectious and desert marshes had already disappeared under quays, under an Admiralty, under colleges, military schools, and halls of justice, in which sat courts of appeal; under commercial tribunals, composed of foreigners and natives; and, lastly, under manufactories of arms, of linen, of woollen, of tapestry, and even of gold and silver thread, silk, glass, and velvet.

To secure these buildings, and even the humblest wooden cottages, from the ravages of fire, he himself set the example of devotedness; he took the situation of a police-officer of the second class. In this occupation, which gave him the superintendence of the others, he has been seen to run over the burning beams. To preserve his new city, he daily manifested a boldness, a forgetfulness of self, equal to the ardour and temerity with which, eighteen years before, he had wrested from the Swedes this pestilential and uninhabited spot. A memorable example of that perseverance which is the distinguishing quality of all great men, and which, wherever it is found, awes, and inspires respect, even when its object is reprehensible; but which here was the more worthy of remark, because it was consecrated to the accomplishment of the noblest and most patriotic of all the inspirations of genius.

It is in such great foundations as these that we recognize its impress. Alexander left his in Alexandria; Peter, in Petersburg. This unnoted spot of earth, transformed by the will of a great man, was destined to become, a hundred years after his death, the centre and emporium of a commerce which ranks among the most extensive in the world; its three hundred thousand inhabitants exporting or importing native or foreign productions to the value of

between forty and fifty millions sterling; there, the fate of Europe was to be decided, and the whole moral and political aspect of the northern regions was to undergo a change!*

We must here observe, that the influence of the Neva, on the destiny of Russia, was always remarkable. In 862, the possession of it gave Novgorod to Rurik, and from this the Russian empire had its rise.

About 1240, the recovering of this river from the Swedes by Alexander Nevsky, conferred on that prince his glorious surname; Novgorod attached itself to that victor, who had restored the Baltic to it; and the empire, which was broken by discord, and trampled on by the Tartars, was recommenced by him.

In 1323, a new conquest of the Neva from the Swedes, and the foundation of Schlusselfurg by Yury, attached Novgorod to that first Grand-prince of Moscow; and from this union of Novgorod with Moscow we must date the origin of the concentration of power in that branch of the Ruriks, and of the liberation of Russia, as well as the brilliant rays of glory, which, for the second time, illumined that country under its first dynasty.

Lastly, it was the definitive conquest of this same river, in 1703, from the same power, and the transformation of its marshes, which had been the cradle of the empire, into a warlike and commercial capital, that secured to Russia its civilization, and to Peter the Great his renown.

In every thing, however, he had met with obstacles, but he had surmounted them all. Did he wish to attract to the Baltic the commerce of the centre of Russia, which was thrown away upon Archangel? A deaf ear was turned to his advice. Yet at Petersburg the Russian merchants enjoyed several privileges, and a milder climate allowed

* See Malte-Brun.

of two freights in a year, while at Archangel the ice would admit of only one ; to which must be added, the advantage of a calmer sea, a better port, lower duties, a much shorter distance, and a much larger concourse of purchasers ; but nothing could move his obstinate subjects, and, perhaps, to the present hour, they would have been plodding on the White Sea, had not Peter, in 1722, prohibited the use of that port to the merchants of the other provinces of his Empire. He treated them tyrannically for their own benefit ;—like ignorant and stubborn children, to whom we do good in spite of themselves, and whom, till they reach the age of reason, we are obliged to treat with severity.

Henceforth how was it possible for revolt or disobedience, or even for ignorance and indolence, to escape him ? Not satisfied with having himself acquired knowledge on all subjects, he with his own hand drew into these new paths his people, whom he compelled to second him. They could no longer say, “ God is on high, and the Tzar is afar off :” more rapid in his movements than all the great men who have been so famous for their celerity, it seemed to the Russians that their Tzar was every where at the same time.

At the moment when they supposed that his labours tied down to Moscow this legislator, this reformer of manners, the founder of workhouses for mendicants, of establishments for public instruction, of schools of artillery, engineering, and mathematics, and of manufactories of all kinds, from a pin to a cannon ; at that moment they beheld him suddenly appear at a distance of a hundred and eighty leagues, to trace out and to open, with his own hands, those canals by which seas, nations, and hemispheres, now unknown to each other, were one day to be drawn closer, or united.

It was he who, from north to south, and on all the points of his vast dominions, put into their hands the compass, the pen, the musket, and even the axe and the mattock. Almost at the same instant they saw him visit the sea of Archangel, conquer that of Asoph, cover Lake Ladoga all at once with a hundred vessels; surprise with his infantry, and carry sword in hand, the Swedish fleet; wrest from it the Gulf of Finland; found there, in contempt of all the elements, a military and commercial capital; efface cataracts, clear the sand-banks from the rivers which flow into the Black Sea and the Caspian; and, lastly, design, build, and launch vessels of eighty guns on the seas of Xerxes and of Odin!

The universal impulse which he gave to his subjects, he every where kept up by his unexpected appearance. In all places, and at all times, each one looked for his arrival. They were sure that nothing would escape his experienced eye, and that he would be certain to appreciate every thing, and to make himself obeyed; as he well knew how to execute whatever he commanded.

In fine, as we are told by Perry, the English engineer, who was in his service, and who was, besides, so phlegmatic, downright, and discontented; this Prince delighted in being, perpetually and alternately, a civil and marine engineer, smith, founder, gunsmith, fire-worker, artilleryman, carpenter, pilot, teacher of all kinds of military exercises, and astronomer; putting to every thing a practised, powerful, and indefatigable hand, by which all was brought into form, the officer, the soldier, the weapon which he bore, the sailor, the ship itself, victory, too, the result of so many efforts, and even the fireworks and triumphal arches by which victory was rewarded.

CHAPTER VI.

THE original nucleus of such immense external and internal power was, however, nothing more than fifty young companions in debauchery, whom he transformed into soldiers, and the remains of a sailing-boat, which had been left forgotten in a magazine. In twenty-five years, this seed, nursed by a skilful and vigorous hand, had, on the one part, produced* two hundred thousand men divided into fifty-five regiments, and cantoned, with three hundred field-pieces, in permanent quarters; a body of engineers, and, particularly, of formidable artillery-men; and fourteen thousand pieces of cannon, deposited in a great central establishment, in the fortresses, and in three military magazines on the frontiers of the three chief national enemies, the Turks, the Poles, and the Swedes. On the other hand, from the remnant of the sailing-boat had arisen thirty ships of the line, a proportionable number of frigates and smaller vessels of war, two hundred galleys with sails and oars, and a multitude of experienced mariners.

But with what treasures did Peter undertake the moral and physical transformation of such an extensive empire? We behold an entire land metamorphosed: cities containing a hundred thousand souls, ports, canals, and establishments of all kinds, created; thousands of skilful Europeans attracted, maintained, and rewarded; several fleets built, and others purchased; a permanent army of a hundred

* See Manstein.

and twenty thousand men trained, equipped, provided with every species of arms and ammunition, and several times renewed; subsidies of men and money given to Poland; and, lastly, four wars undertaken. One of those wars spread over half of Europe; it fired the north and the south, the land and the sea; and when it had lasted twenty-one years, the treasury from which it was fed still remained full. And Peter, whose revenues, on his accession to the throne did not exceed a few hundred thousand pounds, declared to Munnich, "That he could have carried on the war for twenty-one years longer without contracting any debt."

Will order and economy be sufficient to account for these phenomena? We must, doubtless, admire them in this great man, who refused himself every superfluity, at the same time that he spared nothing for the glory, the utility, and the ornament of his empire. Let us do justice to his efforts when, after having wrested the indirect taxes from the boyards, who were at once, civil, military, and financial managers, and from those to whom the boyards sold in portions the collecting of them, he, in imitation of Holland, entrusted the finances to committees, composed of select merchants.

We may also feel less surprise at the increase of his revenue, after we have seen him subjecting to taxation the clergy as well as the laity; suppressing a number of monasteries, by forbidding monastic vows to be taken before the age of fifty; and uniting their estates to the domains of the crown, which were swelled by confiscations, by the reverting back of his brother Ivan's appanage, and by his conquests from the Swedes.

We must remark, at the same time, that he had opened his states to foreign commerce, and to the treasures of Europe, which were carried thither to be exchanged for the

many raw materials which had hitherto remained valueless ; we must consider the augmentation of revenue which necessarily ensued, and the possibility of requiring to be paid in money a multitude of taxes which had previously been paid in kind.

It was thus that, in place of quotas of provisions, which were brought from remote distances, and were highly oppressive to the people, he substituted a tax : the sum raised was applied to the payment of contractors. It is true that the nobles contrived to screen themselves behind these agents, in order to fatten upon the blood of the people ; but Peter at length perceived them ; the evil betrayed itself by its own enormity ; it grew so that it caught the eye of the Tzar. Then it was that he created commissions of inquiry, passed whole days in them, and, during several years, keeping these great peculators always in sight, made them disgorge by fines and confiscations, and punished them by the knout, the halter, and the axe.

To this superintendence by the head of the state, which, subsequently to 1715, the contraction of the war within a narrower circle allowed him to exert, let us add the increase of salary to the collectors, which deprived them of all pretext for misconduct. Nor must it be forgotten that most of the stipends were paid in kind ; and that, for several years, the war, being carried on out of the empire, supplied its own wants. It must be observed, too, that the cities and provinces in which the troops were afterwards quartered, furnished their pay on the spot, by which the charge of discount was saved ; and that the measures which they adopted for their subsistence appear to have been municipal, and consequently as little oppressive as possible. Finally, we must remark, in 1721, the substitution, in place of the Tartar house-tax, of a poll-tax, which was a real impost on land, assessed according to an enume-

ration repeated every twenty years, and the payment of which the agriculturists regulated among themselves, in proportion to the value of their produce.

At the same time, the reformer refused to foreigners the privilege of trading with each other in Russia; he even gave to his subjects exclusively the right of conveying to the frontiers of the empire, the merchandize which foreigners had bought from them in the interior. Thus he ensured to his own people the profit of carriage. In 1716, he chose rather to give up an advantageous alliance with the English, than to relinquish this right in their favour.*

This superintendence, however, these numerous efforts and cares, this order and economy, these improvements, and this triple tax of men, of things, and of money, will not yet account for the possibility of so many gigantic undertakings, and such immense results, with a fixed revenue in specie, which, in 1715, was estimated, by an attentive observer, at only some millions of roubles. But in the fiscal expedients of a despotic empire, it is to fluctuating revenue, to illegal resources, to arbitrary measures, that we must direct our attention; astonishment then ceases, and then begins pity for one party, indignation against another, and surprise excited by the ignorance, with respect to commercial affairs, which is displayed by the high and mighty geniuses of despotism, in comparison with the unerring instinct which is manifested by the humblest community of men who are free.

Then, we indeed shudder with dismay at sight of the tremendous persistance of these great men, amidst so much toil, and woe, and blood; as though they had made of their scheme of glory or of civilization one of those barbarous deities who must be served at any cost, and who can be rendered propitious only by human sacrifices!

* See Manstein.

CHAPTER VII.

It is the genius of Russian despotism, therefore, that we must question, as to the means by which it produced such gigantic results; but, however far it may be disposed to push its frightful candour, will it point out to us its army recruited by men whom the villages sent tied together in pairs, and at their own expense? Soldiers at a penny a day, payable every four months,* and often marching without pay; slaves whom it was thought quite enough to feed, and who were contented with some handful of rye, or of oats made into gruel, or into ill-baked bread;† unfortunates wretches, who, in spite of the blunders of their generals, were compelled to be victorious, under pain of being decimated! ‡

Or will this despotism confess that, while it gave nothing to these serfs, who were enlisted for life, it required everything from them; that, after twenty-one years of war, it compelled them to dig canals, like miserable bond-slaves? “For they ought to serve their country,” said Peter, “either by defending or enriching it; that is what they are made for.”

Will this autocrat pride himself on the perennial fullness of an exchequer, which violated its engagements in such a manner, that most of the foreigners who were in his service were anxious to quit it?

What answer will he make to that hollow and lengthened groan, which, even yet, seems to rise from every house

* See Manstein.

† See Perry.

‡ See Kamensky, Life of Mentzikof.

in Taganrock, and in Petersburg, and from his forts, built by the most deadly kind of statute-labour, and peopled by requisitions? To construct these, one half of the inhabitants of the villages were sent, and were relieved by the other half every six months; and the weakest and most industrious of them never more saw their homes!

These unfortunate beings, whatever might be their calling, from the common delver to the watchmaker and jeweller, were torn without mercy from their families, their ploughs, their workshops, and their counting-houses. They travelled to their protracted torture at their own expense; they worked without any pay. Some were compelled to fill up swamps, and build houses on them; others, to remove thither suddenly, and establish their trade there; and the whole of these hapless men, one part of whom were bent to the earth with toil, and the other part in a manner lost in a new world, were so badly fed and sheltered, or breathed such a pestilential air, that the Russians of that period assert no less than a hundred thousand of them to have been engulfed in these abysses.

Listen to the complaints of the nobles and the richest merchants: after the gift of a hundred vessels had been required from them, they were forced to unite in this slough to build stone houses, and were also constrained to live there at a much greater expense than they would have incurred in their own homes. And when even the clergy, in its turn, remonstrated against the excessive taxes laid upon the priests, who were able to indemnify themselves out of their flocks, who can be astonished at the possibility of so many creations, and at the plenitude of a treasury which opened so widely to receive, and so scantily to disburse?

Personal services, taxes in kind, taxes in money, these were the three main sources of the power of the Tzar. We

have just seen what estimate we ought to form as to the manner in which the first of these was employed. As to the taxes in kind and in money, how could the insulated cries of such a multitude of tax-payers, who were scattered over so wide a space, have reached the present age, if the excess of a simultaneous and universal evil had not blended them into one vast clamour, stronger even than time and space? It is from this we learn the names of the throng of taxes which were laid upon every thing, and at every opportunity, for the war, for the admiralty, for the recruiting-service, for the horses used in the public works, for the brick and lime-kilns required in the building of Petersburg, for the post-office, for the government offices, for the extraordinary expenses, for the contributions in kind, for the requisitions of men and their pay and subsistence, and for the salaries of those who were in place; to which must be added innumerable other duties on mills, ponds, baths, bee-hives, meadows, gardens, and in the towns, on every square fathom of land which bore the name of black or non-free; and all this was aggravated by other exorbitant and grinding burthens, and by the fleecing of the artisans, in proportion to their industry and their presumed wealth; the result of which was that they concealed both; the most laborious of them buried their earnings that they might hide them from the nobles, and the nobles entrusted their riches to foreign banks, that they might hide them from the Tzar.

To this we have yet to add the secondary oppressions. Collectors, whose annual pay was, for a long time, only six rubles; and who, nevertheless, accumulated fortunes in four years, for they converted to their own use two-thirds of the sums which they extorted; executing by torture whoever was unable to pay, they made the most horrible misuse of the unlimited powers which, according

to the practice of absolute governments, were necessarily entrusted to them; despotism being unable to act otherwise than by delegation.

These men had the right of levying taxes on all the markets of the country, of laying whatever duties they pleased upon commodities, and of breaking into houses, for the purpose of preventing or discovering infractions of their orders: so that the unfortunate people, finding that they had nought which they could call their own, and that every thing, even to their industry, belonged to the Tzar, ceased to exert themselves for more than mere subsistence, and lost that spirit which only a man's personal interest can inspire.

Accordingly, the forests were peopled with men driven to desperation, and those who at first remained in the villages, finding that they were obliged to pay the taxes of the fugitives as well as their own, speedily joined their companions.

What can bear witness more strongly to the disordered state of those times than the facts themselves! They show us *grandeeshes*, who were possessed of the highest credit, repeatedly convicted of embezzling the public money; others, hanged or beheaded; and a vice-chancellor himself daring, without any authority, to give places and pensions, and, in so poor a country, contriving to purloin nearly a hundred and fifty thousand pounds. It was not, therefore, the Tzar alone whom the people accused of their sufferings.

But such is the tenure of despotism, that, in depriving the people of their will, it takes upon itself the whole responsibility. All, however, agree that, about 1715, they beheld their Tzar astounded at the aspect of such numerous evils; they acknowledge the efforts which he had made, and that all of them had not been fruitless.

But, at the same time, to account for the inexhaustible abundance of the autocrat's treasury, they represent him to us as monopolizing every thing for his own benefit, giving to the current coin of his empire the value which suited his purpose, and receiving it from foreigners at no more than its intrinsic worth.

They accuse him of having engrossed the purchase or sale of numberless native and foreign productions, either by suddenly taxing various kinds of merchandize, or by assuming the right of being the exclusive purchaser, at his own price, to sell again at an exorbitant price when he had become the sole possessor.

They say also that, forestalling every thing, their Tzar made himself the sole merchant trading from European Russia to China and Siberia, as well as the sole mint-master, the sole trader in tobacco, soap, talc, pitch, and tar ; that having also declared himself the only public-house keeper in an empire where drunkenness held sovereign sway, this monopoly annually brought back into his coffers all the pay that had been disbursed from them.

When, in 1716, he wished to defray the expenses of his second journey to Holland, and at the same time avoid being a loser by the rate of exchange, what was the plan which he adopted? He laid his hands on all the leather intended for exportation, which he paid for at a *maximum* fixed by himself, and then exported it on his own account, the proceeds being made payable in Holland, where it was purchased by foreigners.

It is thus, that many of his contemporaries explain the riches of a prince who was the principal manufacturer and merchant of a great empire, the creator, the superintendent of its arts. In his eyes, his subjects were nothing more than workmen, whose labours he prompted, estimated, and rewarded, according to his own good pleasure ; he reserved

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to himself the sale of the produce of their industry, and the immense profits which he thus gained, he employed in doubling that produce.

What a singular founder of commerce in his empire was a monarch who drew it all within his own sphere, and absorbed it in himself ! We may, however, be allowed to believe, that he sometimes became a merchant and manufacturer, as he became a soldier and a sailor, for the sake of example, and that the obstinately ignorant repugnance of his subjects to many branches of industry and commerce, long compelled him to retain the monopoly of them, in contradiction to his own wishes.

In conclusion, it is curious to remark, when, for the purpose of enlightening every thing, he wished to make use of despotism which extinguishes every thing, how that weapon of darkness and of death, glancing back against himself, wounded the hand which was most accustomed to wield it ! Solovieff is an example of this. Assisted by the privileges which Peter had granted to him, that merchant had at length succeeded in establishing at Amsterdam the first commercial Russian factory that had ever been worthy of notice ; but in 1717, when the Tzar visited that city for the second time, his greedy courtiers irritated him against that merchant, who was their fellow countryman. Solovieff had not chosen to ransom himself from the envy which his riches inspired. They, therefore, slandered him to their sovereign, and the autocrat, by confiscating this source of riches, destroyed his work with his own hand.

Here, then, as far as regards his external resources, is solved the miracle of such sudden and wonderful creations of all kinds ! Can *our* age feel surprise at whatever may be effected, in the lapse of five and twenty years, by confiscations, arbitrary taxes, monopolies, requisitions, com-

pulsory labour, and a mind that shrinks not from the use of the most desperate means. And when to all these powerful movers we add the docile disposition arising from long slavery, what ground can there remain for astonishment? Do not the onions and the servitude of Egypt sufficiently explain the enormous magnitude of its pyramids? Those, however, are barren creations; while here, we contemplate those living and fertile creations, the works of genius, which, when they are once produced, continue to grow of themselves, and, as it were, by their own inherent powers.

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

SUCH was Peter ! great by the purpose which he had in view, by his perseverance, and by his means ! Not that the latter were uniformly well chosen, or that he was always capable of using them in the most prudent manner, and of controlling himself, as he controlled others : no, this was undoubtedly not the case.

But who can wonder that, following the example of many of his masters in civilization, he did not reform a multitude of excessive monopolies, that he even secured them to himself ; or that the very commerce which he had created, he should have so essentially injured, by perpetuating an Asiatic custom, which gives to the government the right of buying and selling before its subjects ?

These errors are the errors of his age ; his grossness and drunkenness were also the vices of the times. For here we do not mean to reproach him with that savage pity which led him to be present at the execution of his mistress, who had been guilty of infanticide, to kiss her forehead on the scaffold, and merely to turn aside his head when the fatal blow was given.

Nor will be imputed to him as a crime the coarseness of

those entertainments which were meant to serve a political purpose ; where sometimes he ridiculed the ancient manners by burlesques on them, sometimes his priests, whose influence he dreaded, and at other times the Pope, of whom he did not wish to be considered as a partisan.

Neither will history pause to criticise, as was done by the German resident at his court, the barbarism of that nuptial feast, during which each day was marked by the most fantastical whimsies, and by paroxysms of disgusting drunkenness.

It will also pass lightly over the burial of his dwarf, and the marriage of his buffoon, two grotesque and clownish farces, in which his own person, and the most venerable ceremonies of religion, were lavishly introduced.

It will not even dwell on his fits of brutal violence ; though we know that in his orgies, which, however, were less frequent than is supposed, he was on the point of killing those in whom he placed most confidence, and even the man whom he had desired to check him in his rage ; that, on the latter occasion, he condemned himself, and exclaimed that “ he wished to reform others, yet was unable to reform himself ; ” and that, in another instance, when one of them was about to be thrown into the water, he could stop the Tzar’s uplifted hand only by saying to him “ thy history will record this : ” can such bursts of passion, arising from drunkenness, and under the circumstances of the age, excite our wonder ?

It is added, indeed, that one morning, having come sooner than the senators, to the hall where they held their deliberations, he belaboured them all soundly as they entered, with the exception of the oldest among them. It is said, too, that having, on some occasions, applied these brutal corrections by mistake, he thought it quite natural to tell the ministers whom he had beaten without a reason,

as he told his black slave on a similar occasion, that he would make an allowance for this error the next time that they deserved punishment; and that, in fact, he kept his word in all these instances.

All this is but too well proved: but that it should be also true that he daily, and in public, cuffed or caned his principal officers, for slight faults, as well as for serious ones, almost without discontinuing his conversations with those great personages, and without conceiving that he had degraded them in their own eyes or in those of others!—Yet such acts of boorish violence as these are susceptible of explanation; they admit even of excuse in a country, which, for several centuries, had known no submission but that of slavery.

There chastisement, inflicted by the hand of the prince, seemed almost a distinction; as it implied a sort of intimacy, a vassalship immediately dependent on him; it was, as the phrase still in use expresses it, looked upon as a *fatherly correction*. So much did every one, when in the presence of the Tzar, consider himself as being in a state of minority, of childhood even; and so absolutely was there between him and his subjects, not merely the distance between master and slave, but also that which exists between a man who has attained the age of reason, and the beings who have not yet acquired the exercise of that faculty.

In his presence all were divested of free-will; he was their living and irrevocable destiny.

The Russians, nevertheless, and especially since the usurpation of Godunof, were not unaware of the possibility of conspiracy; but as long as they did obey, it was thus they obeyed: there was no other mode known here of commanding and yielding obedience.

Even those ambassadors, who, by residing for many years

in civilized countries, had become polished, when they entered again into this murky atmosphere of slavery, immorality, and barbarism, were obliged to change their eyes and their hearts, in order to accommodate themselves to their situation. They soon forgot there the whole of what they had learned.

Is it, then, wonderful, that the power of such brutal and deeply-rooted manners should have had an influence on the reformer himself; especially when we consider that, to instruct the people and make himself understood, it was necessary he should be perpetually in contact with them, and speak their own coarse language; and that, to drag them from the darkness in which they were involved, fear being their only tangible point, he was compelled to seize them by the single hold which it was possible for him to take?

But let us listen to his own language, when, on various occasions, he exclaimed to those about him, "You may make war on wild beasts, it is a pleasure which is not unbecoming to you; but as for me, I cannot amuse myself in such a manner, while I have so many to combat in my obstinate and untractable subjects. They are animals whom I have dressed like men; I often despair of overcoming their pertinacity, and eradicating their wickedness from their hearts. Let me, therefore, be no longer painted as a cruel tyrant by those who are unacquainted with the circumstances which have imperiously directed my conduct; what numbers of persons have thwarted my designs, rendered abortive my most beneficial plans for the country, and compelled me to use the utmost rigour! I sought for their assistance, and appealed to their patriotism: those who have comprehended and seconded me, and have been the most useful to my people, I have loaded with rewards; they have been my only favourites!"

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY may, therefore, be allowed not to wonder at the coarse manners of one of her greatest characters.

But, however painful it may be to pass from love to hatred, it is one of the fatalities of the historian to have to admire and detest by turns, and that, too, with respect to the same man. And why should it be more astonishing to see a man sometimes exciting our enthusiasm, and sometimes our indignation, than to know that he is composed of body and mind, or, in other words, of life and death, of eternity and corruption?

Is it imagined that, because the historian has delighted to indulge in one of these feelings, he is, therefore, incapable of speaking the language of the other?

It has too long been supposed that indifference alone can be impartial: thank Heaven, far from forbidding admiration, the history of men sometimes inspires it; and, when this is the case, why should her enthusiastic accents be stifled? Truth is what is required from history, and when the truth which she has to record is all fire, is it with the ice of a frozen unfeelingness that its flames can be made obvious? No! since she must paint every thing, all colours are necessary for her; since she must say every thing, all tones of speech are suitable to her; that of enthusiasm as well as that of indignation. It is by these means that she must perform her task, the task of describing, and depicting, not lifeless truth, but truth glowing with life and with all its natural hues, with all its passions, its sallies, its disgusting or enchanting nudities; and all the

impressions which it must have made on contemporaries who were possessed of acute optics, sound minds, and pure hearts.

Let us, therefore, leave to the contemporaries of Peter the Great, to raise their cry of love or hatred; let history preserve them both, and posterity decide. A man, who is a despot by right of birth, suddenly starting up alone in the midst of darkness, perceives the light! He advances towards it, he drags with him a whole people, and amidst their cries of admiration or of anguish, he pushes onward, like fate itself, to that luminary which he alone beholds, and from which nothing turns him aside.

Let us hearken to those two vast and clamorous outcries, which will be heard through ages; the one, barbarous, but plaintive, will undoubtedly not accuse him of the triple and brutal intoxication of wine, and wrath, and power, which was the result of those unpolished manners which it desires to be perpetuated. It will, however, reproach him with the tyranny which overturned and violated the most deeply rooted usages and customs, and compelled the adoption of new; and his prodigality of the toils and of the lives of his subjects. If this voice may be trusted,* he pushed even his virtues into vice by their excess: in him, justice became cruelty. It bids us recall to memory the hesitation of the Senate, when that body was called upon to condemn to death the Vaiwode of Kargopol for his exactions; and the ferocious exclamation of the Tzar: "Well then! I order him to be quartered, and his members cut into pieces, to be distributed among the Vaiwodes, to teach them to be just, and not to deprive of their subsistence and their lives my poor subjects, who cannot defend themselves from their oppression."

* See Leclerc. The Traveller for thirteen years.—Manstein.

Here, too, the accusing cry will allege the horrible punishment of Talitskoi. This fanatical printer, imagining that he was inspired, dared to spread the doctrine, that "the birth and actions of the Tzar proved him to be Anti-christ." He then fled into Siberia, but his flight was in vain. He was brought back before his master, who seemed to think that to punish such a crime against his power and against civilization, all existing kinds of punishment were worn out or insufficient ; he, therefore, imagined a new one. It is asserted that, by his orders, in his own palace, and even before his own eyes, a fire fed by corrosive liquors was lighted, over which the unfortunate Talitskoi was suspended, till his flesh was gradually corroded, his muscles were dried up, and his still living remains dropped into this infernal flame, by which they were consumed.

It may be hoped that this narrative is envenomed by hatred : but the enemies of the regenerator will add to it his well-known harshness to his first wife ; the frightful and fully-proved massacre of the Strelitz ; the unjust and atrocious execution of Glebof, and of Moens ; and so many other instances of ferocity.

To this terrible charge another acclamation, composed of native and foreign voices, replies, that all these imputations are true, but that their degree of criminality depends upon circumstances. It acknowledges the brutality of some of his passionate acts, which, however, is sufficiently accounted for by the difficulties of his situation, arising from the rebellious obstinacy of his subjects, and, especially from the circle of meanness that surrounded him ; slavery being still more productive of tyranny, than tyranny is of slavery.

It recalls to memory, not for the purpose of vindicating his furious sallies, but of pointing out one of their causes,

that their violence was often independent of his will ; that, having been the victim of the ambition of a sister and the revolts of the Strelitz, his boyhood had been poisoned by debauchery, and even, as some contemporaries affirm, by a more direct crime.

Often at that period, his earliest perceptions, his tenderest feelings, and his nightly repose, were confused and broken by sudden horrors : we have seen rebellion startle him up from his bed, pursue him, seize him even upon the altar, and brandish over his head the dagger, which God alone was able to turn aside. Hence originated the nervous irritability, which so predominated in his constitution, that any strong feeling often became in him a protracted and terrific convulsion. And hence, perhaps, was also derived his fortunate attachment to order and discipline ; and, at the same time, his excessive jealousy of encroachments on his power, and the suspicious, ferocious rage which he manifested against the slightest semblance of revolt.

But it is here more especially, that, eager to recall to mind the many beneficial results which were obtained, this voice of the new manners dwells on the impotence of the reigns which preceded and followed ; whence arose the necessity of completing every thing within the term of a single life, and, consequently, of turning back at once, and with violence, from the east to the west, the whole of this Muscovite mass.

It adds, that in revolutions as in war, which is also a state of revolution, every thing is achieved by means of toil and blood ; that, for this reason, all great warriors and politicians have never scrupled to use them without stint, and the Tzar less than any of those great men ; that he exacted more from others, because he spared himself less than any one ; and went more beyond reasonable bounds

because he had a greater and nobler object in view ; there being, in general, nothing which is so apt to be overstrained as the attempt to effect the accomplishment of beneficial purposes.

Lastly, it exclaims that these gigantic beings, these colossuses, are always sculptured out on a large scale and in masses ; that they are marked by striking asperities, Nature seeming to have neglected the nice finishing of the details, which she reserves for beings of an inferior species, who are destined to humbler efforts, and made for less stormy times.

But here, the accusing cry breaks in upon the defence : with the voice of the ancient manners is blended the cry of blood, the blood of a son expiring under the inflexible hand of a father ; all the other voices are put to silence ; even that of history loses its boldness. Other accents are here required. And what man is there who will be rash enough to decide peremptorily upon this great question, where the mind and the heart remain divided, and which seems to separate heaven from earth, by opposing policy to morality ; those two powers, of which the one, wholly pure and divine, ought for ever to have the mastery over the other ?

It is to Peter the Great himself that we are now about to listen, in the midst of all the grandees of Russia, whom, on the 24th of June, 1718, he assembled at Moscow to hear him.

CHAPTER III.

THESE grandees were assembled in the hall which was appropriated to their deliberations. On the one side, they saw there a young Prince of twenty-nine years of age, who was the heir to the throne, and the son of a divorced mother. They recollected that, in 1697, the first wife of their Tzar, being jealous of Anne de Moens, a young foreigner, had contracted an aversion for the foreigners and the arts which they introduced; that, like all the malecontents of that period, she had joined the faction of the old manners, and that, by thus mingling state affairs with those of her domestic establishment, she had violated the duties of a wife and of a subject, and consequently had, in 1698, been banished to a cloister.

These grandees knew not which of the two passions of Peter, that of illicit love, or that of civilizing his empire, had the greatest share in this severity; but they saw that either from a spirit of contradiction, which is so often witnessed in children, and especially in the heirs of kings against their fathers, or from hatred transmitted by blood, and fostered by intrigue, the evil genius of that dethroned mother had, after a lapse of twenty years, involved her son in her ruin.

For it was that prince, the successor to the empire, whom his father now dragged before them as a criminal. There was not one of them that could not recognize him, by his lofty stature, his powerful voice, the filthiness of his dress, and the stupidity produced by continual and disgusting drunkenness.* They had seen him perpetually

* See Bruce.

surrounded by the most ignorant and debauched priests, who were his dearest confidants: to those men he had promised the surrender of all his father's labours, the exile or death of those by whom his parent had been seconded, the destruction of Petersburg and of the navy, and the restoration of the ancient usages.

Hence had arisen his passive resistance to the orders of their Tzar, and his desertion of his country. But, since his return, four months ago, he had been disinherited of the throne, and subjected to the heaviest curses if he dared to appeal from that decision: the blood of his accomplices had been shed; he was a captive. Was not this enough? of what did his father, their absolute sovereign, now intend to accuse him?"

Their Tzar addressed them:* in his large and robust, but already bending form; in that embrowned face, whose eagle features, harsh and penetrating glance, and stern expression, became every day more strongly marked; they beheld the throes of a long concentrated wrath, which finally broke forth in imputations, in violent and accumulated charges of crimes, perjuries, atrocities, pernicious intrigues, and criminal practices.

Their master at length explained himself. They learned that it was in order to evade the sharp-sighted eye of his father that, in 1712, Alexis consented to take as his wife, a young and virtuous female of the family of Wolfenbuttel; but that his ill-restrained barbarity, by causing the death of his amiable and mild princess, soon broke that new tie by which Russia was connected with European civilization. The Tzar, informed them that, "On the 27th of October, 1715, the very day on which the victim was

* See the Manifesto of the Trial, *Memoirs of a German Resident*, Levesque, Leclerc, &c.

buried, finding it impossible any longer to doubt that his obstinate heir was the determined enemy of all his beneficent plans, he had declared to him, both by word of mouth and by writing, that undoubtedly he could not have forgotten the oppression of the country by the Swedes, and their usurpation of the maritime provinces, by which they shut out the Russians from all intercourse with the rest of the world, and thus covered with a thick veil even the sharpest eyes ; nor all that, trembling as it was, before such an enemy, it had cost the country to acquire the knowledge which enabled it to make that enemy tremble in his turn. But that, vast as was the joy with which he, who was his parent and his sovereign, was inspired by the many blessings which Heaven had showered on his labours, it was far over-balanced by the still greater sorrow of seeing the heir to the throne reject all the means of governing that empire after his father's decease.

“ Why did he refuse to learn the art of war, its rules, and its discipline, by means of which alone Russia had emerged from obscurity, and without which it could not be defended ? Did he not know that the Greek empire itself owed its ruin to indolence ? Perhaps, he relied on his generals ; but did it not belong to the chief alone, on whom all eyes were turned, to set a pattern to his people ?

“ Let him look at the example of Feodor ; his occupations became those of his subjects : they all studied his inclinations, and conformed to them. If to the pleasures of that prince, who was his predecessor, they so readily sacrificed their own pleasures, how much more readily still, in imitation of his slothful and untractable nephew, would they not relinquish their labours !

“ His natural disposition,” he said, “ was adverse to what was required ! But how was instruction to be gained

without practice, and how, without instruction could he be enabled rightly to commend,* to reward or to punish, when occasion called for it? in a word, how could he govern under such circumstances, without borrowing the eyes of others, and doing every thing by their means, *like a young bird that still waits to be fed?*

“ Let him no longer plead the delicate state of his health, since he was not so much called upon to encounter the fatigues of war as to learn the art of it. Let him make a resolution! this will be enough; as it was with his predecessor, who introduced into Russia the breeding of horses, though he had not bodily strength to manage a mettlesome steed.

“ Let him learn that if, (as he had said, to excuse his indolence,) many princes who were not warriors were fortunate in war, it was because, though they did not make it, they were versed in it: like Louis XIV, whose campaigns were a school for all the world, though often, while they were in progress, and he was far from them, he was occupied in founding those numerous establishments of commerce, arts, and industry, by which his reign surpassed the glory of every other.

“ In conclusion,” added he,† “ I am a man and am mortal. To whom can I bequeath the care of preserving and of completing that which I have begun? Remember your obstinacy and your degeneracy. How often have I admonished you, how often corrected you, and how many years have elapsed during which I scorned to say any thing to you! But all this has been in vain! Your sole delight seems to be to remain in your apartments, given up to indolence, and stretched on the softest cushions; the only

* Manifesto, as given by the German Resident.

† Manifesto, according to Levesque.

thing which pleases you, is that which ought to make you blush !

“ Do not imagine that, because I have no other son, I write this merely to frighten you. If I do not spare my own life, when the good of my country and the happiness of my subjects are in question, why should I spare yours ?

“ I would sooner trust my empire to a stranger who is worthy of it, than to an undeserving son !”

CHAPTER IV.

SUCH was the threatening language which, as the Tzar assured his nobles, he had addressed to his son.

He added that, ten weeks afterwards, disheartened, no doubt, by Catherine giving birth to a son, Alexis replied, “ That his father might dispose of the crown in favour of his younger brother ; and that he earnestly requested him to do so, because he felt himself too enfeebled in body and mind to rule over so many nations.”

They were also told that, on receiving this answer, their irritated master had written again to his obstinate offspring, and had said, “ I do not stand in need of your consent to settle the succession to the throne, which so entirely depends on my pleasure ; I see plainly that my advice has made no impression on your heart, since that heart it remains silent. If, while I am living, you thus treat my wishes with contempt, is it probable that you will pay more respect to them when I have ceased to exist ?

“ You swear to renounce the throne ; but what reliance can be placed on the oaths of a hardened heart ? Even were it, at this moment, really your intention to hold them

sacred, the long beards, who wind you about as they please, would soon force you to break your word." He added, "that the fondness of Alexis for these obstinate Muscovites already inspired them with the hope of recovering under his reign, those offices from which their indolence and debauchery now excluded them."

The close of this letter reproached him with ingratitude. "Far from assisting your father, you censure, nay, you slander all the good he does at the expense of his health, which is already injured, to gain the love and the prosperity of his subjects. He has, therefore, strong reasons for believing that his son will overturn every thing, if he survive him; but he will not abandon the State to the caprice of his offspring. Let him either render himself worthy of the throne, or enter into a monastery—otherwise, he will treat him as a criminal."

The Tzar continued his narrative. Alexis, he said, had replied, that he wished to become a monk; he wrote a short note, to ask his father's consent; illness prevented him from writing more. Such was the concise answer of this rebellious son.

His father, meanwhile, visited him; he repeated his pressing solicitations, and his reproaches of his son's voluntary incapacity; and, in the hope of overcoming his pertinacious resolution to prefer a cloister, he gave him six months to weigh the inconveniencies of such a measure.

The Tzar then set out to Denmark, Holland and France, with the belief that he left Alexis confined to a bed of pain by a serious disease; from which bed, however, the Prince arose, on the same day, in perfect health, to celebrate, by a banquet, the departure of his father.

Finally, seven months after this deception, on the 27th of August, 1716, and from Copenhagen, Peter ordered his son to come to a decision; he must either join him

immediately at the army, or appoint *a day for his abjuring the world*.

The reply of the Tzarevitz was another falsehood. He pretended to obey the summons of his parent ; but he fled to foreign countries.

Here, without any concealment, the Tzar made known to the grandees of his empire in what manner he had brought about the return of his rebellious offspring ; the promised pardon, which was afterwards retracted, or made conditional ; the interrogatories to which he had been subjected, and the answers which he had returned. He ended by consigning the criminal to their justice.

The Prince appeared before them ; he owned that he had constantly and voluntarily shut his eyes against the new lights ; that he had often injured his health by taking needless medicines to have a pretext for remaining in idleness ; and that, on one occasion, when pressed by his father, he had even confessed, that he was looked up to as the hope of the old Russians, and of the populace.

Witnesses testified their having heard him exclaim, that, “ if an opportunity should arise during the absence of the Tzar, he would say one word to the archbishops, who would repeat it to the priests, and the priests to their parishioners, and that then he would be compelled to reign, even in spite of himself ! That, if such should chance to be the case, Petersburg, and the navy which he abhorred, would not long remain with the Russians.”

As to those who had connected him with civilization by his marriage, “ they were,” he said, “ infamous wretches who had tied a diabolical woman to his neck ! whose heads he would, some day or other, exhibit upon stakes.” And, with respect to his flight, he had resorted to it for the purpose of avoiding a cloister, though his counsellors had assured him, “ that he might sign as many renunciations of

the throne as he pleased ! that even monastic vows were of no more consequence than old wives' tales ; and that the monkish dress was not nailed to the head !"

He himself added, that, having preferred to fly, he had written from his asylum to the senate and the archbishops ; and had held himself in readiness, not only to succeed, by fair or foul means, to his father, whose death he wished ; but, even during his life, to take advantage of an insurrection, which was impatiently desired, to hurl him from the throne.

CHAPTER V.

THE grandees had heard the charge, and the confession of the criminal ; he was the second personage of the empire, the individual of all others whose actions could be the most useful or the most injurious : he was one of its defenders ; yet, notwithstanding this, it was in the midst of a terrible war, when the country, exhausted by so many sacrifices, though on the point of reaping the fruits of them, saw Austria and the north of Europe combining, in order to snatch them from her : it was at such a critical moment, that, deceiving his father and his sovereign, he declared himself his enemy, by deserting his political and military post, to throw himself into the arms of one of those powers, which was already jealous of the rising glory of the Russians !

The culprit had, it is true, been since disinherited of the empire ; but his judges were doubtful whether his crime did not deserve death, as well in the eyes of justice, which

look only to the past and the present, as in those of policy, which look also to the future.

And, in truth, at this epoch of Russian regeneration, was not the still cherishing a wish to destroy it, high treason against their country, no less than against their Tzar?

The accuser, the tone of the accusation, and all the attendant circumstances, gave sentence by anticipation. But, if they should dare to pronounce it, would Peter carry it into effect? They had no doubt of it. The civilization of his people was a work conscientiously undertaken: to that he had sacrificed sister, wife, a whole generation, and still more, and a thousand times, himself! Nor was it any longer a mere conception of his genius; it was already a living and perfect creation. They themselves made a part of the new nation, formed out of able foreigners, and the flower of the natives.

And nevertheless there had existed among them, for twenty-nine years, a being by whom it was reprobated and abhorred: he even threatened to destroy it in the blood of those superior-minded men who had hastened from all quarters, relying on the word of the regenerator. The rebel, it is true, was heir to the empire—was the son of their Tzar; but that Tzar was their creator; he was at least as much their father as he was of this obstinate being, whom, during eighteen years, he had fruitlessly laboured to reform.

The alternative was, indeed, an embarrassing one! On the one side was a nation, his own work; on the other, was a son! Towards which had he the most imperative duty to perform? Whether ought the many children of his genius, or the child of his blood, to gain the upper hand? Of these two creations, whose co-existence was rendered incompatible by the fault of one of them, which ought to be sacrificed to the other?

In truth, the question here no longer turned on a renunciation, disinherison, or even compulsory vows. The confession of Alexis had demonstrated their insufficiency! the mortal enemy of civilization might rise again from that religious death! It was necessary to join to it a political death, a physical death; in a word, death of all kinds! and, that barbarism might irrevocably perish along with this devoted victim, it was equally necessary that the greater part of the grandees who were engaged in that work of civilization, should co-operate in this great sacrifice.

Such, no doubt, were the ideas of their master; those on which he had meditated for five months, and which he believed to be inspired by Heaven itself: for they knew that it was from the foot of the altar, where he had lain prostrate for several days, that he had come to put his son into their hands.

They were slaves—they were judges in their own cause; and the flight of Alexis seemed to give to a fatal decree, dictated by reasons of state, the sanction of rigorous justice: they pronounced it!

Let history for a while suspend hers: attentive and immovable, let her keep her eyes fixed on this inflexible and most persevering of all geniuses, in this giddy and rugged road.

Alexis was condemned on the sixth of July, 1718. On the seventh, a report was spread, that, on his sentence being read to him, he fell to the ground in the most alarming state of terror, and desired to see his father. The latter, followed by all the grandees of the state and of his court, went to receive his last farewell, and mingle his tears with those of his son. The rest is a mystery. The Tzar was seen to quit with a dejected countenance the apartment of the unfortunate Alexis, who expired some hours after having embraced his father.

Peter wept over the victim* before he was immolated ; he wept, too, over his coffin, which he himself accompanied. But the statesman remained inflexible in him. The ashes of his son were yet warm, they were still wet with his tears, when he loudly declared that this son, “the most insincere and ungrateful being that imagination could conceive, had been justly condemned !” He gloried in having made this sacrifice to the love of his people, as well as in having banished or put to death all his accomplices.

Four years after, fearing that, on his decease, the minority of the son of this victim might revive the hopes of his mother, and of the party of the ancient manners, he declared by a decree, (as Ivan III. had done in his letter to the Pskovians) “that the reigning sovereign was the absolute master to dispose of the throne to whomsoever he pleased.”

In fact, it was not long before he crowned Catherine ; doubtless, with the intention of preserving, when he should be no more, the great work of his life, by the reign of her who had been the companion of his toils, and by her being surrounded with grandees who were interested in civilization.

CHAPTER VI.

SUCH, in this melancholy part of his immense career, was the persevering and terrible march of Peter the Great ! Thus did policy obtain an undivided triumph ! But in the present day, who is there who relying, like him, solely on important and unbending reasons of state, with his foot on

* Levesque, Leclerc, Memoirs of Bruce, Memoirs of the German Resident. The Traveller during Thirteen Years, &c. &c.

the victim will dare to say, "It was not a murder, it was a sacrifice! an act of necessity, not of hatred! a fatality of situation! a political fatality!" which, in the opinion of the greatest warrior and legislator of modern times, is well calculated to replace in our poems, that religious fatality of which the ancient tragic writers made such frequent and such terrible use!

A dangerous fatality, indeed, to interpret! when the prince who trusts to his inspiration, making a god of his policy, creates necessities to which he sacrifices the present race, and even his own son! when, in short, he submits to incur such a terrific responsibility, that history, while it judges him, is seized with horror and admiration, and scarcely dares to absolve, lest it should seem to be an accomplice.

The memoirs, however, of that period, written, it must be owned, by foreigners, who saw their own safety in the fall of Alexis, give their approbation to the act. The most celebrated writer of modern times has also sanctioned the fatal decree. Lastly, the circumstance which makes the strongest impression of all, is, the firm conviction felt by a great man, which, from consequence to consequence, led him on to this frightful sacrifice, the particulars of which he himself widely published, in which he wished his whole empire to bear a part, and which Heaven, in its turn, seems to have rewarded by success.

There is grandeur, no doubt, in this tremendous victory of policy over nature, and we may conceive the hesitation of history, when she looks only at this side of such a catastrophe. But no sooner does she fix her eyes on its morality, than a cry of horror escapes from her. Then, suffied with iniquity, with perfidy, and with ferocity, sinks into dust before her view that policy, which is so perishable in itself, and yet so arrogant, so contemptuous in its triumphs; which, in a word, is so proud of suc-

cess, for whose duration it is indebted solely to that eternal morality, which, Heaven be praised ! survives its master-strokes, and prevents them from obtaining the authority of principles.

We have seen the originally circumspect progress of this colossal policy in the advice of Peter to his son; in his repeated hints and menaces, and in his hesitation to accomplish them; succeeded all at once, by the flight and return of the rebel, his trial, and his condemnation.

But between the flight and the condemnation there exists an infernal abyss of ferocious and treacherous tyranny, into which his policy, haughty and inflexible as it was, did not hesitate to plunge. The historian, not losing himself by tracing it in its disgusting details, has hitherto kept his eyes raised to their first elevation, that he might consider the great man only in his purpose. Now, however, he is compelled painfully to retrograde among these tortuous horrors: the man stripped to the naked soul must now be exposed: a plain narrative will suffice; and, as is too often the case, this hideous episode will display to us, in one and the same being, a hero when we regard him with reference to the end in view, and a miscreant when we contemplate him in his means.

CHAPTER VII.

IN September, 1716, Alexis deceived and fled from his father. To escape from the nascent civilization of the Russians, he took refuge in the midst of European civilization. He put himself under the protection of Austria, and lived in concealment at Naples, with a mistress.

Peter discovered his retreat. He wrote to him. His

letter began with just reproaches; it ended with terrible threats, if Alexis did not obey the orders which he sent to him.

These words, in particular, held a prominent place: "Are you afraid of me? I assure and promise you, by the name of God, and by the last judgment, that if you submit to my will, and return hither, I will not inflict any punishment upon you, and will even love you better than ever!"

Relying on the faith thus solemnly given by a father and a sovereign, Alexis returned to Moscow, on the 3rd of February, 1718; and on the next day, he was disarmed, seized, interrogated, and ignominiously excluded from the throne, with all his posterity; he was even laid under a curse if he dared ever to appeal from this sentence.

Nor was this all; he was secluded in a fortress. There, every day and every night, violating his sworn faith, every noble feeling, all the laws of nature, and those laws which he had himself given to his empire,* an absolute father armed himself against a too confiding son with a political inquisition, which equalled the religious inquisition in its insidious atrocity. He tortured the pusillanimous mind of this hopeless being, with every fear that heaven and earth can inspire; he compelled him to impeach friends, relations, and even the mother who bore him; and lastly, to accuse himself, to render himself unworthy of living, and to condemn himself to death, under pain of death!

This protracted crime lasted five months. It had its paroxysms. In the first two, the exile and spoliation of several grandees, the disinheriting of a sister, the confinement and scourging of his first wife, and the execution of a brother-in-law, did not suffice.

* See in his Code or Concordance of the Laws, chap. vi. art. 1, 2, 6, 8, &c.

And yet, in one day, Glebof, a Russian general, the known lover of the divorced Tzarina, had been impaled in the midst of a scaffold, the four corners of which were marked by the heads of a bishop, a boyard, and two dignitaries, who had been broken on the wheel and decapitated.* This horrible scaffold was itself surrounded by a circle of trunks of trees, on which more than fifty priests and other citizens had been beheaded !

This was, indeed, taking a terrible vengeance upon those who, by their intrigues and superstitious obstinacy, had reduced this unbending heart to the necessity of sacrificing his son or his empire ! a punishment which was a thousand times more culpable than the offence ; for what motive can furnish an excuse for such atrocities ? But it seems as though, impelled by the suspicious instinct of unnatural governments, Peter had obstinately persisted in seeking and finding a conspiracy, where there existed nothing but an inert opposition of manners, which hoped and waited for his death that it might be brought into action.

And, nevertheless, this direful butchery has found flatterers ! The victor of Pultava himself gloried in it as a victory. “ When,” said he, “ fire meets with straw, it consumes it ; but when it meets with iron, it must go out.” Then, he coolly walked about in the midst of the torments which were being inflicted ! It is even said that, prompted by a restless ferocity, he ascended the scaffold, to question again the agonized Glebof, and that having made a sign to him to approach, the latter spat in his face.

Moscow itself was a prisoner ; to quit it without his leave was a capital crime ; its citizens were ordered, under pain of death, to act the part of spies and informers against each other.

* Bruce.

The principal victim, meanwhile, had remained trembling, and insulated by the many blows which were struck around him. Peter then dragged him from the prisons of Moscow to those of Petersburg.

It was there that he laboured indefatigably to torture the mind of his son, and to wring from him even the slightest particulars which he could recollect, of his past irritation, intractability, or rebellion; he noted them down each day with a horrible exactness, triumphing in each avowal, numbering every sigh, and every tear, summing up the whole in a detestable account, and struggling to convert into a capital crime all these fleeting thoughts, and all these regrets, to which he strove to give weight in the balance of justice.

When, at length, by dint of putting his own construction on these confessions, he supposed that he had made something out of nothing, he hastened to summon the most eminent of his slaves. He described to them his accursed work; he set forth to their view its ferocious and tyrannical iniquity, with an artless barbarism and a candid despotism, which was blinded by his right of absolute sovereignty; as if any right could exist independent of justice, and was dazzled by his object, which, fortunately, was great and useful.

By this means, he hoped that he should cause to be attributed to justice the sacrifice which he made to his policy. He wished to justify himself at the expense of his victim, and silence the double cry of conscience and of nature, by which he was persecuted.

When, by his lengthened accusation, this absolute master thought he had irrevocably condemned, he called upon his hearers to decide. "They had," he exclaimed, "heard the long enumeration of crimes, such as were almost unheard of in the world, but of which his son had been

guilty towards him, who was his father and his sovereign. They were well aware that to himself alone belonged the right to give judgment; nevertheless, he asked their assistance; *for he stood in fear of eternal perdition, and the more so, as he had promised forgiveness to his son, and had sworn it to him by the decrees of God.*—It, therefore, remained with them to do justice, without considering his birth, without paying any regard to his person, that the country might not be endangered.” It is true that with this clear and terrible order he mixed up a few words, which bear the mark of clumsy cunning. “They ought,” he said, “to pronounce without flattering him, or fearing to fall under his displeasure, in case they should decide that his son was deserving of only a slight punishment.”

The slaves comprehended their master; they saw what was the horrible assistance which he wanted from them; accordingly, the priests who were consulted replied merely by quotations from their sacred books, choosing in equal number those which condemned and those which pardoned, and not daring to throw any weight into the scale, not even that sworn promise of the Tzar, of which they feared to remind him.

At the same time, the grandees of the state, to the number of a hundred and twenty-four, yielded implicit obedience. They pronounced sentence of death unanimously, and without hesitation: but their decree condemned themselves, far more than it did their victim. We there see the disgusting efforts of this throng of slaves labouring to efface the perjury of their master; while their mendacity being added to his own, but makes it stand out with a still more striking prominence.

For his own part, he inflexibly completed his work: nothing made him pause; neither the time which had elapsed since his wrath was excited, nor remorse, nor the

repentance of a wretched being, nor trembling, submissive, suppliant weakness ! In one word, every thing which usually, even between foreign enemies, is capable of appeasing and disarming, was powerless to soften the heart of a father towards his child.

Nor is this all. He had been his accuser, and his judge,—he chose also to be his executioner ! On the seventh of July, 1718, the very day after the passing of the sentence, he went, attended by all his nobles, to receive the last tears of his son, and to mingle his own with them ; and, at the moment when he was imagined to be at last melted to pity, at that moment he sent for *the strong potion* which he himself had ordered to be prepared ! Impatient for its arrival, he hurried it by a second message ; he presented it to him as a salutary medicine ! and did not retire, with “ a very dismal countenance,” it is true, till he had poisoned the unfortunate creature who was still imploring his forgiveness. The death of his victim, who expired in dreadful convulsions some hours afterwards, he then attributed to the terror with which his sentence had inspired him ! This was the flimsy veil with which he sought to cover all these enormities from the eyes of those who were about him—he deemed it sufficient for their brutalized manners ; he, besides, commanded their silence upon the subject, and was so well obeyed, that, but for the Memoirs of a foreigner, who was a witness, an actor even, in this horrible drama, history would for ever have remained in ignorance of its final and terrible particulars.*

* See Note (3) at the end of the volume.

BOOK XI.

CHAPTER I.

IN what manner are we now to extricate ourselves from this labyrinth of blood and iniquity? Where shall we again find the great man? But was he not always the same, persevering right onward in the same direction, traversing with ever equal and undeviating pace, sometimes the fields of glory and of light, and sometimes the abysses of horrors? Always great, even amidst those horrors, because he perpetually, and without reference to self, held his course towards a single and vast object, and, with a mighty hand, drew after him twenty millions of men!

He was the inspiring mind of Russia; and, like strong minds, he unceremoniously impelled forward to the purpose that he had in view, the vast body which he animated.

The contest was begun. Sacrifices must be made, whether to advance, or to recede. These purblind beings wished to make a last effort to retrograde into their ancient darkness: by a more violent effort, Peter wished to compel them to proceed. Had they been successful, it would have been time and money and blood uselessly lavished, and not a revolution, but a counter revolution, which is the least durable of all violent changes! It is only by accident, and for a moment, that rivers run back towards their

source; while, on the contrary, revolutions are like those sudden accumulations, those cataracts, which sweep onward in the natural direction of the stream.

It is true that, generally speaking, they do badly that good which it is often so difficult to do well. Thus it happened that, barbarous against barbarism, Peter the Great showed himself more detestable than barbarism itself. In witnessing these atrocities, we seem to see the genius of good overcoming the genius of evil, by making use of the baleful arms of his antagonist.

Yet, the many hours passed on his knees in imploring direction from Heaven, the confession of the remorse which wrung him for his perfidy to his victim, and, lastly, the tears which he shed on the tomb of that victim, conspire to prove that the sacrifice was a painful one, and that the reformer felt all the magnitude of it. It was not, as had been the case throughout his previous rugged career, merely his mortal life that Peter had offered up for his country; it was, perhaps, even his immortal life.

But, it must be owned, that the blood which was shed, was not shed in vain: the last hope of barbarism was destroyed, and the regeneration of the Russians was secured! For, to comprehend and scan correctly this rude and irregular genius, we must look at him only with reference to his object; in that alone he wholly and continually existed; it was with a view to that alone that he loved or hated, smote or upheld.

Let it, therefore, not excite surprise, to behold him regarding with a scrutinizing, inflexible, ferocious attention, the punishment of the enemies of civilization; and yet, at the same time, when the question concerns those who have assisted him to regenerate his country, looking on them with an eye of indulgent kindness, even though their faults, or their vices, may retard his object.

Let us listen to their grateful voices, breaking the long silence imposed on them by the murder of Alexis; they will proclaim that noble heart to be no less capable of love than of hate; they will describe the lengthened and gloomy dejection of spirits under which every one beheld him suffering, a year before these horrible executions took place. The miseries of his subjects, the wasting away of his soldiers, that of the thousands of workmen who founded Petersburg, and the mortality which reigned among them, entirely overcame him. Tormenting suspicions agitated his mind, and agonized his heart; for they were felt with respect to the companions of his efforts in the civilization of Russia.

But those doubts were soon elucidated by a prince who perpetually mingled in the labours, the festivals, and the public and private amusements of his subjects; and who, with the glass in his hand, delighted in the artless and frank confidence reposed in him by the talkers and guests whom he met there.

It was thus that, being one day present at the exchange, he was astonished at the inaction of the Russian merchants, and enquired of them the cause. "Father," they replied, "when the leading men of your Court become traders, the traders are under the necessity of remaining idle." And they informed him that Mentzikof and several other grandees monopolized all the contracts for the supply of the state, with a profit one third greater than that which they had themselves required.

As soon as Peter was informed of this, his just indignation burst forth against the infamous cupidity of his favourite. A military commission was appointed to try him; every one believed Mentzikof to be lost; they, however, remarked an emotion of generous pity for the peculator, when, as Mentzikof was reading his defence, Peter

interrupted it, and said to him, in an under tone, "Friend, you have not known how to draw it up;" and, led away by his tender solicitude, he began immediately to correct it with his own hand.

But, at that moment, a captain, one of the youngest of the judges, and the most imprudent, started up abruptly, and exclaimed, "Let us go away! we have no farther business here, since the Tzar himself is teaching the culprit what he ought to say." The Russians relate, that their emperor, though at first astonished at such boldness, was able to restrain himself. "You are in the right," said he to the officer, "take your seat again, and give your opinion." The captain required, that the accused person should stand near the door, read his defence aloud, and then quit the room. "Do you hear that," said the Tzar to Mentzikof; "this is, in fact, the proper mode of proceeding." The culprit obeyed, and left the room, and a majority of voices condemned him to lose his head.

But Peter could not consent to this: he addressed the judges; it was, he told them, just to weigh faults, but services also ought to be weighed; that if the services predominated, clemency ought likewise to predominate. Then, retracing those of Mentzikof, he showed at what price an individual may be the favourite of a great man.

He reminded them, that Mentzikof had been a soldier, a serjeant, an officer; that his intelligent bravery had contributed to the capture of Asoph, of Schlussemburgh, of Nientschantz, and of the Swedish fleet; to that of Dorpt, of Narva, and of Divan; that, in 1704, he had vanquished ten thousand enemies and saved Petersburgh; that, in 1706, he had defeated in Poland the army of Mardefeldt; that, in 1708 and 1709, he had saved the state, by making himself master of Baturin and of the provisions intended for the Swedish army, by revictualling Pultova,

and by bearing an important part in the decisive defeats of Levenhaupt and of Charles XII.

That, subsequently, he had taken Riga, compelled Steinbock, the last hope of Sweden, to capitulate, and reduced Stettin ; that, in the midst of so many labours, he had become a carpenter along with his master, had shared all his other fatigues, and had continually represented him on occasions of ceremony, and even in the government of the empire. He concluded by recommending clemency to be displayed by judges who were not ignorant that, at the epoch of conspiracies, their master had owed his life to the very criminal whose life they now wished to destroy.*

It was thus, say the contemporaries of these events, that this prince, so inexorable to others, defended the companion of his toils, and saved his existence and his rank. Nay, more ; they add, that remorse having stretched the criminal on a bed of sorrow, and brought him to the brink of the grave, the constant and grateful friendship of the Tzar, by the tenderest attentions, saved him from the justice of Heaven, as he had already saved him from that of earth.

They remark, also, that all this was done without weakness ; that in him, the man still remained the monarch, and at once satisfied friendship and justice ; rescuing with one hand his companion in arms, and with the other striking the covetous arrogance of the favourite, by the blows with which he publicly humiliated him, and the enormous fine which he persisted in imposing upon him, in spite of the sordid supplications of the offender.

As to the other depredators, he punished them by banishment and confiscation ; sometimes by death ; but this he did with reluctance. For this very master, who was

* See Note (4,) at the end of the volume.

suspicious enough to interrogate on the scaffold itself the agony of his victim, in the cruel hope of detecting more partisans of ignorance and superstition, was the same man, whom, almost at the same moment, his subjects beheld giving way to the noble transports of a quite different joy, and celebrating in a banquet, and by volleys of artillery, the proved innocence of two of his generals, friends of the new lights, who had been falsely accused of peculation.

Accordingly, it is less by referring it to natural ferocity than to his passion for civilization, that his contemporaries explain the inflexibility with which he treated his son; when, at the same time, on his hearing of the death of Charles XII., they saw the generous tears flowing, which he vainly endeavoured to hide; and when, also, they remembered what sobs burst from him on Scheremetef, and especially Lefort, being snatched from him, the first by time, the second by disease, and how he then hallowed his regret by the funeral honours which he paid to them; thus striving to invest their death with the ensigns of immortality.

Nor did these witnesses forget the violent sally of passionate grief with which he overwhelmed his old boyards, when, either from fatigue, or from feeling, their national pride wounded by such testimonies of respect for a foreigner, they imagined that the burial of Lefort being almost over, they might be at liberty to withdraw. "You are impatient," said he, "to be at home, that you may rejoice at the death of the admiral; you are afraid that, during a long ceremony, you will not be able to keep up the melancholy looks which you have put on; and that your delight will break out and betray you. Wretches! in your hearts you are exulting at this death, as if you had gained a victory!" They quote, also, the affecting exclamation of their Tzar, five years subsequently, when,

in the excess of gladness occasioned by a victory over the Swedes, he said to Golovine, " This is the first pleasure, unmingled with pain, that I have tasted since the death of Lefort !"

CHAPTER II.

LET us, then, not entertain the belief that this genius, who delighted in concentration, could feel affection only for men in the mass ; even if all these instances of tender regret, and of generous pity, selected from numerous others of the same kind, were not enough to bring conviction, it would suffice to recal to mind his unchangeable fondness for Catherine, and his despair when, on the 25th of April, 1719, he lost the son whom he had by her, and who was the only one that was left.

His officers tell us that, at that period, the Tzar being seized with those convulsions to which he was subject, they saw the muscles of his face become contracted, and his neck stiffened and twisted in a frightful manner. Till that time, during such painful paroxysms, which lasted for several hours, the presence and the voice of a woman had possessed the power to quiet him ; but, on this occasion, he repulsed all importunate attentions. For three days and three nights, overwhelmed with sorrow, this colossus remained alone, shut up, stretched on the ground, hiding himself from the light of day, and from every eye, rejecting all food, and waiting impatiently for the end of a life, which thenceforth must be without a hope and without a future.

They feel a delight in calling to mind with what resolu-

tion their great senator, their sage, for so they denominate Dolgoruky, came to snatch him from this deep dejection. They relate how, speaking to him through the door, which the speaker also threatened to break open, he reproached him with his deserting the empire, declaring to him that his successor should be chosen, and at length, forcing him to open his apartment, and show himself to his whole senate, whom Dolgoruky had brought with him, and whose unexpected presence, by astonishing the Tzar, silenced his sorrow, and compelled him to repress his despair.

For, to whatever fits of passion might give way so ardent a mind, which was spoiled, too, by the habit of being so often and so much in the right, in opposition to a whole people, it is those very men whom the despot so roughly directed, who stand up as his defenders. They are anxious that posterity should admire in him a multitude of traits, which bear the impress of moderation, and of deference for reason and good sense, even when his authority was resisted in the most decided manner. The memory of these is preserved in their writings; and, here, again, the Russians feel a double pride in connecting the name of their Dolgoruky with that of their Tzar.

The instance which they most delight to adduce is, the boldness of this senator, in the year of famine, when, by an ukase which was already signed, Peter was about to sacrifice Novgorod to Petersburgh: this magistrate had not co-operated in the injustice; he found it committed. But then, seizing, in full senate, the obnoxious ukase, he, at the risk of his life, suspended the execution of it, carried it away with him, and went to the next church, to receive the Sacrament, which the priest was then administering.

The intelligence of this offence, which was envenomed

by envy and servility, was instantly speeded to the Tzar; he hurried to the senate, and sent orders to Dolgoruky to appear there immediately. But the latter, without turning his head, or diverting his attention from heaven to earth, replied, "I hear you," and went on with his prayers. A second and more imperious message had as little effect upon him. "I give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," replied he, unmoved; and it was not till the holy Sacrament was over, that he took his way to the Tzar.

As soon as the monarch saw him, he rushed furiously at him, seized him, drew his sword, and, with a threatening voice, exclaimed, "You shall perish!" But Dolgoruky remained unmoved, and pointing to his heart, "Strike!" said he firmly; "I do not fear to die in a just cause!" On hearing these words, the Prince dropped his hand, his voice softened, he stepped back, and said in a tone of surprise, "But, tell me, what could have made you so daring?"—"Yourself," replied the minister; "did not you order that the truth should be told you, with respect to the interest of your people?" He then explained; and Peter, who was convinced by what he heard, thanked him for his courageous sincerity, and begged pardon for his violence.

He, however, perpetually relapsed into that violence; the sword of the despot was again often seen to menace the abrupt and resolute frankness of his minister; but his arm was always arrested by the ascendancy, which with him was irresistible, of reason, supported by masculine and patriotic virtue.

It was thus that, in another instance, when he had required from that daring senator an account of an ukase for recruiting, which, also, Dolgoruky had had the temerity to suppress, his wrath gave place to tears of com-

passion and sorrow, as the virtuous minister depicted to him "the exhausted state of the present generation, which he sacrificed, without mercy, as he did himself, to future generations."

Lastly, on the occasion of the new and extraordinary compulsory labour, which was imposed for the excavation of the canal of Ladoga, Dolgoruky, indignant at such an abuse of power, dared to destroy, in the midst of the senate, the order which his master had himself dictated. On witnessing this unheard of action, the senators started from their seats in affright; they removed to a distance; they kept as far as possible from this sacrilegious being, on whom the thunder was about to fall, for the terrible Tzar had just entered. But Dolgoruky remained in his place; and, unastonished either by his own boldness or the violence of the Tzar, he opposed to the first burst of wrath from his irritated master, the glory of such a noble reign which he was on the point of tarnishing, and the good of his subjects, whom doubtless he did not, like Charles XII. desire to ruin. Then, he stated the reasons of his indignation, while at the same time he himself blamed its violence.

It is said, that the whole of the senators were struck with astonishment, to see the furious glances of their formidable Tzar lose their fierceness; his features, which were swoln with anger, become composed; his lips, which foamed with threats, acknowledge his error, and revoke his order; and his pride, jealous as it was, far from punishing the brutal sincerity of his counsellor, be satisfied with the regret which he had expressed to him.

Nor was it with respect to this great personage alone that Peter displayed so much moderation and love of justice; for proof to the contrary, we may refer, among other instances, to Bassewitz, to Kreitz, to Brevern, and even to an ivoschick.

The last of these persons was nothing more than a man who let out horses, which, in the simplicity of his manners, the Tzar was accustomed to hire in the same way as his people; but one day, being made angry by their slowness, he drove them without mercy, and one of them having died in consequence, the owner demanded the value of it. Peter refused to pay it; the ivoschick had the boldness to resort to the law; his sovereign agreed to abide by the decision of the tribunal, appeared before it, defended himself, lost his cause, and submitted without a murmur to the verdict which was given against him.

Kreitz was an admiral; he had lost, by his disobedience, two of the men of war on which the Tzar set such a value, and which he had, perhaps, built with his own hands! Accordingly, the council of war condemned the criminal to be shot.

But Kreitz appealed to foreign admiralities, and Peter not only gave his assent beforehand to their decision, but when they confirmed the fatal sentence, he revoked it. He commuted the punishment of the offender; nay, more, at the expiration of twenty-four hours, he remitted even the milder penalty, and gave to this officer, who was more unfortunate than guilty, the superintendence of a navy, with the vessels composing which he did not think it proper to intrust him again.

As to Bassewitz, he was a minister of the young Duke of Holstein, who was at once a nephew of Charles XII. and, since his being taken prisoner at Pultova, a dependent on Peter. This envoy himself confirms the narrative given by the companions of the great man. The circumstance occurred in 1721; the peace of Nystadt had recently been concluded; being pressed by the foreign minister, Peter owned to him that, in the treaty, which was yet a secret, the interests of the duke had been neglected.

Deeply grieved, the minister exclaimed against such conduct, and Peter promised to seize the earliest opportunity of satisfying him."

But, shaking his head, Bassewitz replied, "I wish this new promise may be more to be trusted to than so many others, on the faith of which my master came to kiss the hand which was held out to him; for my part, I shall die of grief, for having, at my age, had the weakness to believe that there were mortals who did not break their words, and to bring here the offspring of the line of Vasa, to be made the sport of foreign policy.

Schaffirof and Mentzikof, who were present when this reply was uttered, relate that they turned pale, and were about to express their indignation, when Peter looked at them, and said, "His zeal is pure and sincere; would to God that those who serve me were inspired with the same;" then, ordering wine to be brought, he added, "Bassewitz, let us drink to your master, and I will soon compel you to forbear regretting that you confided him to me."

In fact, three years later, in 1724, the eventual right of the Duke of Holstein to the throne of Sweden was supported by Russia, and was acknowledged; Denmark was forced to restore his dominions to him; and, lastly, Anne, second daughter of Peter the Great, married this nephew of Charles XII.

It was thus that, after a sanguinary contest of twenty-one years, the blood of these two great rivals was blended together, to flow in the veins of Peter III.; and to this alliance the Russians are indebted for beholding on their throne the offspring of two of the most illustrious men whom the North has ever produced.

But among the numerous other testimonies of equity and moderation, the contemporaries of this great man cite also that of Brevern. He was a counsellor of Riga, which

city was conquered by Peter; misled by some one who was about his person, the prince claimed the property of a lake, which he imagined to form a part of his domain. The counsellors of the city, struck with terror, had already given up the point, when Brevern boldly opposed the pretension of the sovereign, demonstrated its injustice, and prevailed upon his colleagues to join in opposing it. Peter was quickly informed of the refusal; and, far from being irritated by it, he weighed all the reasons, and, having acknowledged their equity, he praised the courage of this Livonian, and rewarded him with the gift of nobility; and that his virtue might benefit his fellow-countrymen, he at the same time appointed him vice-president of the college of justice for the conquered provinces.

CHAPTER III.

How are such noble sentiments as these to be reconciled with so much cruelty in a father, or with the cold-blooded ferocity of a prince, whom we see quitting his repast, for the purpose of cutting off heads, and then returning, without any emotion, to resume the scarcely suspended hilarity of the banquet. How could exist, at the same time, in so absolute a heart, so much equity, so much satisfaction at the sentiments of honour and virtue which he discovered in those about him, even when they resisted him? Was it the caprice of a despot wearied by servility? Was it a natural instinct of justice? or, rather, that, being himself born with a masculine and martial frankness, he loved in others the free and high-spirited voice of truth? Or, lastly, was it that the measure of

barbarian blood which it was necessary to sacrifice to civilization was filled up by the blood of his son?

But, no! these various examples of moderation, of indulgent pity, of long and tender attachment, preceded as well as followed that mortal blow which was given to barbarism. We know, in truth, that after the terrible execution of the heir of the empire, he pardoned the criminal Gagarin; declaring that, "thenceforth, it was his intention to correct his subjects rather by mildness than severity." But we know also, that, on the following day, the culprit having retracted his confession, and publicly accused the Tzar of having extorted it from him by violence, the latter, whose indignation let loose his natural disposition, ordered him to be immediately hanged upon a gibbet fifty ells high.

It was, likewise, subsequently to the murder of his son, that, in a last contest with the old manners, the Tzar spread terror through Russia by the death or mutilation of great numbers of fanatics, whom the salutary reform of a multitude of superstitious practices and abuses had excited to revolt.

The whole of his life, therefore, was implacable against the enemies of civilization; those who were attached to his person admit it. But what great deeds were ever achieved without great passions? And what powerful passion is there which has not united extremes, and which, fixed and persevering, has not become, at the same time, full of love and of hatred. It is in the name of one of these two feelings, that his admirers seem to intreat forgiveness for the other.

That eye, so ferocious when it darted its glances on the enemies of civilization, they show to us full of the most attentive and mild solicitude for the welfare of his people. Having formed a park at one of his residences, and the

entrance of it having, without his knowledge, been forbidden to his subjects, he exclaimed, with astonishment, "What! how can any body imagine that I spent so much money only for myself!" Then, with his ingenious and constant attention to every thing which might conduce to the perfecting of his people, he ordered the park to be transformed into a garden of instruction. The trees were cut into figures of animals, and he soon after added sixty groups of the same figures, in gilded lead: they represented Esop's fables, with the explanation in the Russian language, engraven on iron plates, which were placed near them.

Thus it was that, in every quarter, his paternal care was directed even to the minutest particulars. After he had conquered Finland, he perceived that the health of the inhabitants of that province suffered very much from the careless manner in which their shoes were made; and he immediately sent Russians among them to teach them the art of making better shoes, from the bark of their birch trees. He did still more; for, to hasten the adoption of this improvement, his generous pity intrusted to their priests the distribution of prizes to those who should soonest become dexterous in this kind of manufacture.

Hearken to him once more: that voice which, of late, inexorably thundered against a son who had identified himself with Muscovite barbarism, is the same that now mildly invites to his cabinets of anatomy and natural history, the curiosity of his subjects. He even wished his servants to attract them thither, by every kind of condescension, and by presenting to them, gratis, the best refreshments.

Lastly, the prince who, not long ago, coolly walked about among fifty scaffolds, which were dripping with the blood of fifty priests of ignorance and barbarism, is the same prince whom his officers saw standing by the bed of

Weydt, who was his marshal of the court, calling to his aid the most eminent physicians, intreating them to save for him “his servant, his general, the best in his empire;” and not only snatching him from death by his assiduity, but afterwards enriching him with an estate of two thousand five hundred pounds a-year. It is still the same tzar, on many occasions so terrible, whom they represent to us with his head uncovered, a torch in his hand, and he himself in deep affliction, accompanying, at one time, for several versts, the funeral procession of Erskine, his physician, and, at another, that of two deceased Englishmen, one of whom was a rear-admiral of his fleet, and the other his interpreter.

Let us extend our patience for a few moments longer to the admiration of his followers, and they will lead us, in the train of this great man, into the manufactories, or rather the numerous schools of industry, which were founded by his care. It was there that skilful foreigners, selected by himself, taught their arts to a multitude of young Russians, who were maintained in them at his expense. Can this be the same man? That countenance, so full of ferocity when he is viewing the punishments inflicted on the enemies of these arts, how can it become so benevolent, when he is assiduously visiting the beneficent and useful establishments by which the arts are diffused? See him daily inspecting the progress which his subjects make in knowledge; bidding the new adepts show him the products of their juvenile industry; encouraging the most ingenious of them by a kiss on the forehead, or a present of some rubles; and, lastly, at his own cost, setting up as masters, those who have acquired the highest degree of proficiency.

CHAPTER IV.

THE joy of Peter, no less than his grief, bears witness against that stern insensibility which he manifested only towards the enemies of civilization.

Among his amusements, (all of which were not of a coarse kind, as, for instance, his parties with his sister and his daughters, whom he had caused to be educated with the utmost care, at which parties several plays of their own composition were acted,) his followers refer to the entertainments which were given to celebrate the peace of Ny-stadt; and they describe the affecting and ingenious gratitude which their great Tzar displayed to the small sailing vessel, the first sight of which had been the inspirer of his genius.

They tell us with what care he delighted to adorn it, to cover it with gilded copper, and to arm it with silver cannon; then, with what precautions he had it brought from Archangel to Petersburgh; how, on its arrival, he himself assumed the office of its pilot, while the highest grandees of his empire acted as sailors; and how, also, he steered it through his fleet, which was dressed out with flags, and, as it were, pointed out to it those gigantic vessels which had been so often victorious, and which saluted the humble boat by volleys from the whole of their artillery; that, as the Tzar expressed it, "this worthy little grand-father might receive the compliments of all these fine children, who were indebted to him for their existence."

But what epoch can, better than that of the peace of

Nystadt, show the emotions of a heart which was too great not to be generous, and too generous to have been insensible. Accordingly, they affirm that, if those who are cruel are ferocious in their joy, their prince could not have been born cruel, who, on the day of this glorious peace, opened all the prisons in his states, and remitted all arrears of taxes, that universal happiness might be inspired by so national a triumph.

They remind us, too, that at Pultova, at Narva, Riga, and in all his victories, he behaved with mildness to the vanquished, though they had not always acted with generosity. They add, that if, in his triumph over Erenschild, he did show to his people the vanquished admiral, he did not do it to humiliate his captive enemy, as was the case with the pagan and spurious civilization of the Romans; but that, on the contrary, he exclaimed, "You see here a brave and faithful warrior, whose valour and whose exploits are deserving of the highest rewards, and of our utmost respect."

It was then that, turning towards his subjects, he addressed them, in the words we have already stated, respecting the course of civilization; describing it as having formerly quitted Greece, and being now on the return thither by the way of Russia, after having passed throughout Europe; for such was the idea that always occupied the mind of the regenerator. All their recollections prove that it did so, and particularly those of another triumph, which their gratitude must be permitted to recal to our minds.

It is recorded by them, that, while their master was degrading to the vile station of servants of his buffoon those nobles who refused to acquire knowledge for the benefit of the state, they beheld this prince, him who hated the pageantry and ceremonious pomp of courts, dress himself

one day in his most splendid dress, ascend the handsomest of his carriages, and proceed to some versts from his capital, to meet his ambassadors Golofkin and Dolgoruky: they tell us, also, that as soon as he saw them, he hurried to them, clasped them in his arms, made them take the most honourable seat, and thus led in triumph to Petersburg these two civilized Russians. Then, raising his voice, he declared to his astonished subjects, “that he only did his duty in receiving with such honours the treasure of learning and of refined manners, which these illustrious Russians had been to gather among Europeans, and which they had now brought back to their country.”

Thus it was that he incessantly laboured to attract talents from abroad; as he well knew, also, how to call them into life and multiply them at home, without ever dreading them—for his merit delighted to be reflected in that of others. And thus he felt a gratification in corresponding with the great Leibnitz, whom he consulted; and thought himself honoured by the considerable pension and the grant of nobility which he gave to him.*

Bruce and others, accordingly, make it plain, that a prince who was so much the friend of knowledge, could have hated in his son only the declared enemy of that knowledge. In fact, his hatred did not fall on the head of his son's child. To the same Bruce who had borne a part in the execution of the father, Peter entrusted the education of the son. The Tzar himself took pleasure in lending his aid towards it; and, charmed with the aptness of his grandson, he one day appointed him a serjeant, and another day, an ensign: he frequently raised him in his arms, and folded him to his bosom, in the transports of joy and tenderness. At another time he hung about his neck a portrait of himself, set with diamonds; and, even

* Fontenelle.

thus early, surrounded him by artists, ship-builders, and masters of all kinds.

Following the example set by panegyrists, it is thus that, hiding the horrid nature of the means, not only by the excellence of the end, but also by the success of the result, the admirers of Peter the Great delight to show the Tzar in his fairest aspect; they enumerate all the benefits for which his empire is indebted to him: six new provinces; three seas; an extensive commerce; fortresses; ports; a regular army of two hundred thousand men; an admiralty, a naval academy, and a fleet of forty sail of the line and two hundred galleys; a good police; a multitude of elementary schools; colleges for the mathematical sciences, arts, and belles-lettres; an imperial library, and a cabinet of medals; schools of anatomy, medicine, pharmacy, with the best collections of subjects in anatomy, natural history, and botany; a botanical garden; an observatory; printing offices, with new kinds of types; and a gallery of pictures and of statues, by the most eminent masters: all of them things which, before his time, were unknown among this people, who were so ignorant that they looked upon foreign languages as heresies, and the mathematical and natural sciences as witchcraft: who, nevertheless, believed their untilled and frozen land to be the nighest to heaven, their clumsy language the most pleasing to the divinity, and their brutal manners the nearest approach to those of the immortals: and who conceived that their nation was the most rich and eminent under the sun, that to which all others owed their existence, and without which every other people, who were all pagans and impious beings, would perish of famine!

Yet this people, at once so ignorant and so arrogant, did not believe in happiness. Being always tyrannized over, they imagined only malevolent geniuses, and knew

no god but that of evil, and no power but that of doing mischief; so that, in a mild and indulgent prince they would have been unable to recognize a master, and they dreaded all innovations, as a surplus and an aggravation of suffering.

Such was, as we learn from the contemporaries of Peter the Great, the nation which he felt himself destined to regenerate; then, ending as they began, these witnesses repeat that his only friends and enemies were those of the regeneration of his empire. They point out to us that, in his immense career, every thing bore reference to this one idea; every thing was directed to this one end; and that, lastly, if they are to be considered as the greatest men whose lives, influenced by the grandeur and energy of reason or of passion, display the fewest unmeaning and fortuitous actions, then is he the greatest of all men: his unchanging and powerful determination, and his persevering and enthusiastic desire of civilizing his subjects, seeming to them to have inspired and directed even the most trivial occurrences of his existence.

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE we quit this subject we may remark, that the terrible state sacrifice which has so long occupied us, appears to have occupied him less; either from conviction and natural harshness, or from its being the privilege of great minds to rule that which rules others, or, if you please, from their being themselves more exclusively ruled by a single idea.

From 1714 to 1717, he published ninety-two ordinances

or regulations; in 1718 alone, in that year of crime, thirty-six ukases, or regulations, were promulgated, and twenty-seven in 1719. The majority of them related directly to his new establishments; all bear witness to his mind being perpetually occupied in meditation upon the means of completing and perfecting his vast design.

The council of mines dates its origin from that period, as do also the uniformity of weights and measures, the institution of schools for teaching arithmetic in all the towns of the empire; that of orphan-houses and foundling-hospitals, of workshops for the poor, and of manufactories of tapestry, silks, linens, and cloths for soldiers' clothing; the founding of the city of Ladoga; the canal of the same name, which he began with his own hands; that of Cronstadt; the plan of another, which now unites the Baltic to the Caspian, by the intermedium of the Volga; and, lastly, even down to the details of the police, of salubrity, of safety, of lighting, and of cleansing, which, during the previous year, he had remarked in our great cities.

At this sanguinary epoch it was, that, by this multitude of establishments for the promotion of all kinds of industry, he gave the most rapid impulse to the knowledge, commerce, and civilization, to which he sacrificed his son; as though, by thus redoubling his activity, he had sought to escape from himself, or to palliate, by the importance of the result, the horror of the sacrifice.

In several of these ordinances, it is remarkable, that either from the inconsistency which is inherent in our nature, or from the pride of a despot, which believes itself to be detached from and above every thing, he required respect to be paid to religion, at the very moment when, with such cruelty, he was paying no respect to the sanctity of his own oath; and yet the importance of keeping sworn faith must have been well known to a prince who one day said,

“The irreligious cannot be tolerated, because, by sapping religion, they turn into ridicule the sacredness of an oath, which is the foundation of all society.”

It is true, that on this occasion, as he too often did, pushing right into wrong, he wished to mutilate and banish to Siberia a miserable creature, who, when drunk, had been guilty of blasphemy.

Then, nevertheless, and as in all the course of his life, he combated against superstition; but instead of being satisfied with wresting her cruel weapons from her, he armed himself with them, and used them against her votary, who became a martyr in his turn; and, as he had incurred the reproach of having been barbarous against barbarism, so did he incur that of being intolerant against intolerance.

For nothing was left unsaid against this great man; either in consequence of his having unhinged and wounded so many habits and interests, or of the inconvenience which is inherent in despotic states, where all being weighed down, all unite with one voice in complaining; a circumstance which explains why there are no worse detractors of their masters than children and slaves are.

The cries of the unfortunate Rastolnick,* whose groans have reached our times, were, however, not the cries of slaves. These sectaries were, and still are, the blind and declared enemies of all innovation. One of them, at that period, even believed that he might avenge Heaven by an assassination. Under the guise of a suppliant, this fanatic had easily penetrated into the chamber of the prince; he was already within reach of him, and, while he feigned to implore him, his hand was seeking for the dagger under his clothes, when, fortunately, the dagger dropped and betrayed the assassin, by falling at the feet of the Tzar,

* A species of Puritans.

who was holding out to this madman his protecting hand.

This abortive crime had made the persecution rage with redoubled fury, when, all at once, a frightful report was spread; it was soon confirmed; several hundred of these wretched beings had taken refuge in a church, and, rather than abjure their superstitions, had set fire to this asylum, leaving nothing but their ashes to their persecutor. A horrible sacrifice, but which was not useless! Peter saw his error; his intolerance was only political; it was enlightened by these flames, which religious intolerance witnessed with such atrocious joy.

Yet, unable to forgive these sectaries an obstinacy which was victorious over his own, he once more tried against them the weapon of ridicule: he ordered that they should wear a bit of yellow stuff on their backs, to distinguish them from his other subjects. This mark of humiliation, however, they considered as a distinction. Some malignant advisers endeavoured to rouse his anger again, but he replied, "No; I have learned that they are men of pure morals; they are the most upright merchants in the empire; and neither honour nor the welfare of the country will allow of their being martyred for their errors. Besides, that which a degrading badge and the force of reason have been unable to effect, will never be accomplished by punishment; let them, therefore, live in peace."

These were remarkable words, and worthy the pupil of Holland and England, worthy of a prince to whom superstition was a most inveterate enemy. In reality, he was a believer, but not credulous; and even while he knelt on the field of victory, he gave thanks to God alone for the reward of so many toils, and could separate the cause of Heaven from that of the priests; it was his wish that they should be citizens. We have seen, that he subjected them to

the same taxes as his other subjects ; and because the monks eluded them, he diminished their numbers.

His toleration, however, did not extend to the Jesuits, whom he hated as rivals in despotism. But, though he expelled them from the empire, and though his ukases severely punished irreligious acts, and even inattention during divine service, he tolerated the other sects ; he did not hesitate to be present at their worship, and he unmasked the superstitious impostures of his priests, who all, by a detestable instinct, sought to extinguish the light, and to close up every cranny by which it might have a chance of reaching them.

For this reason, they held Petersburg in abhorrence. According to their description of it, this half-built city, by which Russia already aspired to civilization, was one of the mouths of hell. It was they who obtained from the unfortunate Alexis a promise that it should be destroyed. Their prophecies repeatedly fixed the epoch at which it would be overthrown by the wrath of Heaven. The labours upon it were then suspended, and this fear getting the upper hand of another fear, the orders of the terrible Tzar were almost issued in vain.

On one occasion, these lying priests were for some days particularly active ; they displayed one of their sacred images, from which the tears flowed miraculously ; it wept the fate which impended over those who dwelt in this new city. “ Its hour is at hand,” said they, “ and, with all its inhabitants, it will be swallowed up by a tremendous inundation.” On hearing of this miracle of the tears, the treacherous construction which was put upon it, and the perturbation which it occasioned, Peter thought it necessary to hasten to the spot. There, in the midst of the people, who were petrified with terror, and of his tongue-tied court, he unhesitatingly seized the miraculous image, and

discovered its mechanism ; the multitude were stupified with a pious horror, but he opened their eyes by showing them, in those of the idol, the congealed oil, which was melted by the flame of tapers inside, and then flowed drop by drop through chinks which had been artfully made.

At a later period, he did still more ; the horrible execution of a young Russian by the priests was the cause. This unfortunate man had brought back from Germany a highly valuable knowledge of medicine, and had left there some superstitious prejudices. For this reason all his motions were watched by the priests ; and they at last caught up some thoughtless words against their sacred images. They immediately arrested the regenerated young Russian, sentenced him without mercy, and, with a ferocious delight, they destroyed this germ of civilization by torture, fire, and sword.

But this individual evil produced a general good. Indignant at their cruelty, Peter deprived the clergy of the right of condemning to death. The priests lost a jurisdiction which they alleged they had possessed for seven centuries, from the time of Vladimir the Great, and thus the source of their power was for ever annihilated by this execrable abuse of it.

He soon after replaced the hetman of the Cossacks by a tribunal, and the patriarchate by a synod ; he being unwilling that there should be any unity except in the supreme authority ; and, dividing in order to weaken, he was more sure of the submissiveness of a council than of a man ; for he was well aware that, when servitude was in question, assemblies would venture farther, weak men and flatterers always forming the majority ; and besides, collective bodies have less shame, in consequence of the responsibility being divided among numbers.

About 1722, however, and in spite of Theophanes, the

president of the synod, whom we may consider as his minister for religious affairs, the synod dared to desire that a patriarch might be appointed. But, bursting into a sudden passion, and rising abruptly, Peter struck his breast violently with his hand, and the table with his cutlass, and exclaimed, "Here, here is your patriarch!" He then hastily quitted the room, and as he departed, he cast a stern look upon the panic-struck prelates.

He was not at all disposed, by being guilty of an act of weakness, to go back in that career in which, four years previously, the commission of parricide had not stopped him. He is said to have even prided himself on this perseverance. "Louis XIV." said he, "is greater than I am, except that I have been able to reduce my clergy to obedience, while he has allowed his clergy to rule him."

But it was particularly in that sanguinary year, so fatal to the last hope which the old Russians placed in his successor, that he seemed to hasten on the severing of them from their ancient customs, by giving an entirely new form to the administration of his empire. As far back as 1711, he had already replaced the old supreme court of the boyards by a senate, a sovereign council, into which merit and services might obtain admission, independent of noble origin. Subsequently, and every year, other changes had been effected. Thus, in 1717, he brought from France, along with a commercial treaty, the institution of a general police. But, in 1718, he, at one stroke, substituted instead of the old prikaz, colleges for foreign affairs, naval affairs, finance, justice, and commerce, and fixed, by a general regulation, and with the utmost minuteness, the functions and privileges of each of them.

At the same time, when capable Russians were not to be found, he appointed his Swedish prisoners, and the most eminent of the foreigners, to fill these administrative

and judicial situations. He was careful to give the highest offices to natives, and the second to foreigners, that the natives might support, against the pride and jealousy of their countrymen, these foreigners who served them as instructors and guides.

But this was not enough ; and, for the purpose of forming his young nobles to these sciences, he adjoined a considerable number of them to each college. There, from the lowest stations, merit alone could raise them to the first rank. Thus it was that, every thing being wanting, he created at once the administration and the administrators, justice and the judges.

It is worthy of remark that, either from his conscience being disturbed, or from his genius being inspired by the dignity of our Parliaments, it was at the moment when Peter the Great was guilty of one of the worst of crimes, that justice was the object to which he paid the most attention.

CHAPTER VI.

HE had, however, long been preparing himself for this labour. His patriotism, which sought for every kind of national glory, had already begun to bring to light the chronicles that were buried in the dust of the cloisters. It was not, therefore, only with the torch of his genius, and that of justice, such as he had seen it shine among the most civilized people, that he ventured to enter upon the difficult career of a legislator ; it was also with that of Russian history, which is indebted to him for its archives.

By means of this last light, however wavering it might

be, his eagle eye, as his contemporaries termed it, had pierced through the darkness of the Gothic ages, and discovered the origin, the spirit, and the progress, of all the legislation of his empire. He had perceived, that, before Yaroslaf and Isiaslaf, (the beginning and the middle of the twelfth century), the Russians had had no written laws; and, without stopping to investigate what modifications their first code might have undergone in the course of the three following disastrous centuries, his glance had passed rapidly over that obscure and blood-stained interval, to pause only on the reign of the great Ivan.

There, no doubt, scrutinising with a curious attention the enactments of the first Russian autocrat, he must have observed that, at the period in question,* the judge and all the costs of the action, were paid by a tenth of the property in dispute, with the addition of a tax; that inheritances, when there was no will, descended in the natural order; and that, for landed property, a prescription of three years barred the claims of individuals, and of six years barred those of the crown.

He must have remarked, that the peasants, who were then free, and a kind of farmers, could every year change their place of abode, eight days before and after St. George's day, on paying a trifling sum to the landed proprietors; that the slaves were those who were prisoners of war, criminals given into the hands of their accusers, those who sold themselves by a public bargain, and those who became stewards and butlers; that these slaves might be transferred or bequeathed; and, lastly, that their wives, and even those of their children whom they maintained, shared in their fate.

We know not what was the impression made upon the legislator of the eighteenth century by this shapeless code,

* 1497.

which allowed not only of slavery and torture, but also of judicial combats, and entrusted the administering of justice to the armed hands of all the holders of fiefs, notwithstanding the ineffective addition to them of the elder and of the head men of the place.

One thing is certain ; it is, that it was particularly the succeeding age, that of Ivan the Terrible, which attracted and longest fixed his whole attention ; this is proved by his own words, and by the reproaches of many of his contemporaries.

In the monster of the sixteenth century, Peter, who, perhaps, did not sufficiently keep in view the minister of Ivan, seems to have been most forcibly struck with the pertinacious assailant of the provinces bordering on the Baltic, which Adaschef then vainly strove to unite to the Russian empire. He gave his approbation to the legislator who, about the year 1550, withdrew the administration of justice from the rude and greedy hands of military men, for the purpose of entrusting it to the elders, the heads of villages, the centurions, and judges elected by the citizens.

Attributing always to that prince the whole of the good which was done by the minister, he considered as a wise measure the ranking of the boyard-followers below the learned men belonging to the courts of justice ; the care which the third Russian autocrat took to make judicial combats become obsolete ; and the prohibition to execute any capital sentence without the sanction of the supreme court of boyards, of which the prince was president.

On the other hand, the depriving the possessors of military fiefs of the collection of the taxes, and the giving it to agents employed by the exchequer, must have appeared no less judicious to the imitator of that wise measure.

Peter, no doubt, must have delighted also to see the

Tzar of the sixteenth century, forbid the clergy to make any new purchase of immoveable property, resume from them all that which had formerly belonged to the crown, and write to the heads of that order, "That it was hearts, and not lands, which ought to be cultivated by the ministers of religion; that it was not grain which ought to be sown, but the word of God; and that their inheritance ought to be the kingdom of heaven, and not villages and patrimonies!"

It may even be believed, that the reformer of the eighteenth century approved of that ecclesiastical regulation, made in the sixteenth, which is so remarkable for its morality, for the picture which it presents of the horrible depravity of manners of the clergy, and because it preserved, or gave, to the parishioners the right of electing their priests and deacons.

But he must have been astonished to see that, in this civil and ecclesiastical code of a tyrant so ferocious, property, justice, and humanity, were treated with more respect than in the enactments of his predecessors. It is true, that this benefit he might attribute to the two able and virtuous ministers of the early and auspicious years of the Northern Nero.

In other respects, if he looked upon this second Russian code as still stained with the barbarism of the times and the tyrannical spirit of its author, it was not because it permitted bondage to the soil, which a few years afterwards was established by the last of the Ruriks. It may be believed, that Peter, who loved order, no matter what it might cost, was of opinion that to get rid of an insupportable state of confusion, vagrancy, and barbarism, there was nothing to be done but to employ a still more barbarous remedy.

Then, this genius of despotism, thoroughly imbued with

the recollections of the sixteenth century, which was generally so despotic, passed over the confusion of the interregnum, and paused on his own dynasty. He saw his grandfather, Mikhail, the first of the Romanofs, striving to put in full operation the codes framed by the descendants of the Ruriks. He contemplated the succeeding reign; and, either out of respect for a father, or from his mind being occupied with other objects, the reformer stopped at the still existing code of Alexis, which he maintained in force.

But, in a very short time,* the sage Dolgoruky stimulated him by the example; this faithful minister called his attention to Alexis, whom history immortalized, after his having, in 1650, summoned the most eminent Russians of all classes to assist in forming a new code.† “Will his master remain inferior to that prince, who is already a less illustrious warrior than his son, but still greater as a legislator? Why should Peter the Great content himself with this third Russian code? However superior it might be to the preceding enactments, was it not, after all, a trivial and confused digest of those old Muscovite customs which he himself, at his very outset, had overthrown without ceremony? Till this period,” added Dolgoruky, “other cares have turned thee aside from this object; but thou owest justice to thy people, and I warn thee, Tzar, that it is time thou shouldst think of it!”

The minister did not speak in vain: Peter pressed him to his grateful heart. But, on the one hand, time was wanting; and on the other, the laws of Alexis harmonized with absolute power. Peter was indebted to his father for the ukase by which every noble family was made responsible for the crime of one of its members. Some have even said that he owed to him also the institution of the

* See Leclerc.

† The Ulagenia.

secret chancery ; a political inquisition, which too closely resembled the inquisitions of Spain or Venice.*

He, however, felt that the *Ulagenia* of Alexis, a relic of barbarous times, was no longer suited to the Russians. In 1710, therefore, Peter projected civil, criminal, military, and naval codes. With his own hand he copied extracts from the best legislative systems of Europe.

But, amidst such universal ignorance, such an extensive agitation of men and of events, and amidst the blending and fermenting of so many ancient customs, manners, and institutions, it was only by degrees that inconveniences and wants could be ascertained ; it was, therefore, requisite to provide for them by means of the established rules, which he daily rectified, or added to, by what experience and circumstances suggested to him. Hence sprung that multitude of successive regulations, till his creation was in a sufficiently forward state for him to form it into a consistent whole.

Accordingly, with the exception of his military code, we find him, in 1716, ordering that the *Ulagenia* of his father should be adhered to, and declaring, at the same time, that he was employed in bringing a code to perfection. In fact, four years afterwards he completed his work, which he gave to his people, under the title of a *Concordance of the Laws*. To this he joined his *ukase* for the reformation of the clergy.

But no long time elapsed before, with the exception of that immortal *ukase*, this compilation appeared to him to be undigested and insufficient.† In consequence, two years later,‡ he began to unite all the elements of a

* Tatistchef, Schloëzer, Levesque. It is true that the *ukase* issued in 1762, by Catherine, attributes it to Peter the Great himself.

† See the Opinion of the Commission of Russian legislation. which was assembled in 1723.

‡ See Leclerc, vol. iii. p. 568

civil and criminal code, by publishing a collection of his decrees, and by giving orders to a commission to take the best systems of European legislation as the model of a new code. We must here remark, that he added the express condition, of "respecting and preserving the statutes of the ancient Russian codes, in as far as they might be found in unison with the national manners and customs."

In the following year he published a Maritime Code; at the same time, he proscribed gaming, as a sordid passion, and an utterly useless occupation; gave a censor to the synod itself; and appointed an attorney-general and four assessors, in each government, to keep a watchful eye on the judges. The judges themselves he prohibited from receiving either presents or fees; he wished even the counsel to be paid by the State; for, in his opinion, justice ought to be gratuitously administered. Thenceforth, causes were ordered to be brought forward for trial according to the date of their being registered, without any attention being paid to the rank of the person who had engaged in the suit.

After having decreed that places gained in the service of the State, even by peasants, should confer nobility and all its prerogatives, save those which might be claimed by the most ancient nobles who had remained inactive, he added, that a boyard, whom justice had stamped with infamy, should lose his nobility!* By this, he restored its due honour to labour, and its disgrace to punishment.

His laws against breach of promise, and against breach of trust, of powers of attorney, and of sacred contracts, are terrible. But circumstances required that they should be so; they rendered him inexorable against the exactions of men in office, against those of the assessors and collectors.

* See Chap. III. of *Sentences*.

of taxes, and against fraudulent bankruptcies, the subornation of evidence, and false oaths. Manners being wanting, he endeavoured to form them by means of laws and punishments.*

But a clear and precise instruction had already appeared, intitled "The Form of Judicial Proceedings," which each judge was always to have with him as his guide. This regulation preceded his Military Code, which was divided into two parts, in ninety-one chapters, and appeared in 1716. The opening of it is remarkable. Either from sincere piety, or from the policy of the head of a religion, who was anxious to preserve unimpaired the strength of so powerful a mover, he declares that, "of all true Christians the soldier is the man whose morals ought to be the most virtuous, decent, and Christian; the Christian warrior ought to be always ready to appear before God, without which he has not the necessary security for the continual sacrifice required of him by his country." And he concludes, by the following quotation from Xenophon: "that in battles, those who have the most fear of the gods, are those who have the least fear of men." Then, he provides for the punishment of even the slightest offences, against God, against discipline, morals, honour, and even against good manners, as though he had wished to make of his army a nation apart in the nation, and at the same time its model.

But it is especially here that the genius of his despotism luxuriates with frightful complacency. "All the state," says he, "is in him; all ought to be done for him, the absolute and despotic master, who owes to God alone an account of his conduct!" For this reason, every insulting word against his person, every unbecoming judg-

* See Leclerc, pp. 621, 622.

ment of his actions or intentions, must be punished with death!

It was in 1716, that the Tzar thus proclaimed himself beyond and above all laws; as if he were preparing for the terrible stroke of state policy, by which, in 1718, he was to sully his fame with blood.

The preamble of the second part of this Draconian code explains the urgency of it; it shows that, unfortunately, it was only in characters of blood that it could be impressed on the heart of a nation which was at once enslaved and undisciplined; or, in other words, which had for ages suffered all the inconveniences of despotism, without enjoying its advantages.

“It is known,” says he, “that, in 1647, the Tzar Alexis, our father, was the first Russian sovereign who employed regular troops, and who established such good order in his armies, that they gained great glory in Poland and Sweden; but it is known also that, after him, far from perfecting themselves in the military art, the Russians neglected it to such a degree, as not to be able to make head against civilized nations, nor even against barbarians.”

CHAPTER VII.

WE have seen Peter the Great declaring that the Russian army, from the period of its origin till the seventeenth century, made scarcely any progress in the art of war. We must give credit to what he asserts. What other

glance could have darted through so many centuries ! Placed between the two ages of his subjects, who is there that better than this reformer, in whom met the end of Russian barbarism and the beginning of Russian civilization, could perceive through the dust of the national chronicles, which were collected by his care, the progression or the retrogradation of the armies of the Ruriks and the Romanofs, with respect to their improvement ?

Let us follow the regenerator in this immense retrospect. And in the first place, in what particular could the army of Sviatoslaf, composed of those terrible Varangians, the conquerors of Russia, the guards of the earliest of the Ruriks, a hierarchical union of boyards or illustrious warriors, of select boyard-followers, of pages at arms, and of sword-bearers, appear to him inferior to the armies of his last ancestors. To these elements of the first Russian armies there were, it is true, added a crowd of horse and foot volunteers, attracted by the love of glory, the thirst of plunder, and the voice of the leaders : but to which of the two, to this multitude, organized by thousands, by hundreds, and by dozens, or to the provincial and wholly undisciplined regiments of Alexis, ought we to give the preference ?

As to the warlike manners of the two ages, how was it possible for the conqueror of the eighteenth century not to have exclusively admired those of the armies of the tenth century, the flower of which armies consisted of Scandinavians ? How greatly must he have been delighted to observe their military sports, their march in close battalions, their regular manœuvres, their well-entrenched camps, their singular custom of registering, when the battle was done, the names of the valiant and of the cowardly, and, lastly the savage and superstitious pride which, when they were about to be overcome, led those warriors to kill themselves ;

that they might not be the slaves of their conquerors, either in this world or in the next!

As the introduction of gunpowder into Russia took place in 1389, the arms of the previous period were doubtless inferior to those of Ivan. The rich, however, were completely armed, like our knights; as to the others, they provided themselves with whatever came to hand, even to as humble weapons as wooden clubs; which, indeed, was still the case till the beginning of the seventeenth century.

But the eye of the reformer must soon have been lost in a mass of inextricable confusion: the tenth century ends, and from that period commence the civil wars, and the Polish and Hungarian wars, to which must be added the devastations of the Southern migratory tribes. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, intestine dissensions exhausted the nation; in the thirteenth, the Mongol invasion disarmed it; the sword-bearing knights wrested Livonia from it; and the Swedes, Ingria; in the fourteenth, the savage Lithuanians escaped from under its sway; and those pagans deprived it of its finest provinces.

But, at length, about 1370, it was roused by the excess of oppression and by Dmitry Donskoi; it resumed its arms, but not its manners; all was changed or modified: it combated or struggled against slavery in a disorderly and Scythian manner. During this disastrous period of three centuries, however, the army of Novgorod remained untouched, and the remnant of the guards of the princes, united with the Tartars, was often victorious over the European neighbours of Russia.

But at the end of the fourteenth century, when at length the Tartars were enfeebled, and amidst their thinned and scattered numbers Peter began to see again the Russian army, he could find it only in the guard of the Grand-Princes, and especially in the boyards of the princes hold-

ing appanages, and those of the cities; for the citizens and traders took arms only in cases of emergency, and the labouring class never.

Each of these boyards kept up a guard of servants, and of boyard-retainers, who belonged to him. When they were discontented, these condottieri gave up their pay to the prince or the city, abandoned their fiefs, and marched with their guard to some other prince, or some other city, where they found the same remuneration and new domains.

But, at last, in the fifteenth century, the autocrat might perceive that the military authority was concentrated in one point: the boyards lost the privilege of choosing whom they would serve; and the appanages of the princes and those of the Russian republics being united with that of the Grand-Prince, they were now employed to endow, for the first time, and on the tenure of military service, three hundred thousand boyard-followers. Ivan III. divided these men into five main-bodies, the command of which was an object of contention among the boyards and the vaiwodes, who were now reduced to vain pretensions of hereditary office.

Here, as was the case elsewhere, the reformer might observe, that the infantry, which was always composed of the poorest, armed irregularly, and only with swords, pikes, bows, and even clubs, was for a long time weak; that under Vassili (the end of the fifteenth century,) it was estimated at no more than sixty thousand men, a sixth of the army, which is a proportion quite different from what is now established; and that it was, lastly, composed of servants of the boyard-followers, and of city musketeers, who were a kind of militia.

And here we may imagine to ourselves the attention of the despot of the eighteenth century, pausing with com-

placency, to consider the despot of the sixteenth. The latter, or rather his minister, obliged every proprietor, whose lands produced a hundred sacks of grain, to furnish a horseman equipped for service, or the value in money; and, as Ivan increased his revenue, by taking from the nobles the collection of the taxes, he was at length able to form a body of infantry, the first that had been seen in Russia; he armed it with muskets, and divided it among the great cities, where these Strelitz became a kind of janissaries.

This same Ivan IV. also established a war-rate of pay for the soldiers when they were in the field. By this measure he doubled the army, of which he several times raised the effective force to more than two hundred cannon and three hundred thousand men. This was, no doubt, an exceedingly irregular army: but it was sufficient to conquer Casan, Astracan, and Siberia, to crush the Livonian knights, and for a while to recover ancient Russia, as far as the Dnieper and the Duna, from Poland and Lithuania, which were then in a state of discord.

The rapid glance of Peter has at length reached the end of the sixteenth century, and the last of the Ruriks: this age is partly his own. He can take a closer view of its armies; he can number the different corps which compose them. He may remark that, in 1600, the Russian cavalry consisted of sixteen thousand nobles, who were the guards of the Tzar, and of the three hundred thousand boyard-followers, sixty thousand of whom were assembled every spring on the banks of the Oka. Peter knows, by experience, that this season was always dangerous to southern Russia, in consequence of the sudden incursions of the migratory tribes. He is able to estimate the expense of this annual calling into the field, which was nearly forty thousand pounds, while that of the fifteen thousand noble

guards of the Tzar was about a hundred thousand pounds, and that of the regular infantry little short of forty thousand pounds.

This infantry was then composed of twelve thousand Strelitz, six thousand Cossacks, and four thousand four hundred Germans; the rest was made up of provincial regiments, from three to twelve hundred strong, hastily levied, when circumstances pressed, which could scarcely be retained for a twelvemonth under their colours, and which bore the names of the principal cities.*

The victor of Pultava must here have smiled, to see this infantry armed with muskets, bows, and clubs, and which knew no other mode of approaching an enemy's rampart than by raising and pushing to the top of it whole mountains of earth. It had, indeed, so little confidence in its arms and its connected efforts, that, in the steppes, it never ventured to fight against the Tartars, except when it was secured between two rows of loop-holed planks, which extended for three quarters of a league in length.

At last, the armies of the second race appear in their turn. But, doubtless, because he was too much dazzled by the glory of his father, Peter the Great does not seem to have given credit enough to the efforts which, in 1629, his grandfather Mikhail made, for the purpose of opposing the Swedes and Poles with a Russian army disciplined in the European manner.

The Strelitz alone of the district of Moscow are said to have been, at that time, forty thousand in number;† their officers were still provided for by fiefs, from which they were removable; they even received clothing yearly from the Tzar, as had formerly been done by the faithful band, or guard, of the early Ruriks. But the grandfather of

* See Karamsin, Fletcher, Bruce, &c. &c.

† See Manstein.

Peter the Great did not consider these Russian janissaries as sufficient ; he introduced into his army many foreign officers, and had even several German regiments in his pay. It is true, that the jealousy which the natives entertained of these foreigners, was the ruin of the army before Smolensk.

For this reason it was, that in this century Peter seems to have noticed only the efforts of his father. These were, in the first place, the creation, in 1645, of the regular regiment of Butersk, which had fifty-two companies, and was five thousand two hundred strong ;* that of Alciel at Moscow, in 1648, which was of the same strength ; and the introduction of a multitude of European teachers into the army. Alexis distributed to that army the first military book that was known in Russia ; he increased it by adding the Cossacks of the Ukraine ; and Smolensk was at length reconquered by the help of seven Russian regiments, which were organized in the European manner.

But we have heard the conqueror of Charles XII. declare, that, after Alexis, the Russian army had fallen back into a state of confusion, and of childhood, and of such weakness that, on his accession to the throne, the empire was at the mercy, not only of its European enemies, but even of the migratory savages of stagnant Asia.

Accordingly, Peter distrusted his successors ; for he was convinced that after his reign, as had been the case after that of his father, all the old customs would exercise a reaction. In vain, then, would he have bent back towards the light that tree of darkness, which had so long been crooked towards barbarian Asia. It was, therefore, necessary to cut to the quick, to graft on this old and shapeless trunk a multitude of European scions, and to

* See Manstein, Vsevol, Dam. de Ray, &c. &c.

direct their new and flexible shoots towards European civilization.

For this reason it was that, as we have seen, both before and subsequent to the military code, he changed every thing, justice, administration, capital, interests, manners, usages, customs, and even names and habits. Peter was desirous that, after his decease, authority should be in the hands of a great number of men of all ranks and kinds, who were linked to and compromised by civilization, in their deeds, their habitudes, their titles, and even their clothing. Let us by no means forget an addition to this security, of two regiments of guards, fifty of infantry, thirty of dragoons, some of hussars, sixty-seven garrison regiments, and six of militia, distributed in permanent quarters. A formidable total of more than two hundred thousand men, organized, instructed, the best disciplined in Europe, and defenders of the whole of this regeneration, less even against its foreign than against its domestic enemies.

BOOK XII.

CHAPTER I.

THIS great man, meanwhile, was approaching to his end. It is time that we should look a little more closely into his private life; if, indeed, there can be said ever to have existed for this colossal being any other privacy than that of his vast empire. In fact, contrary to so many modern heroes, he had not two different modes of living, the one domestic, the other public; he had only one of them. He was the same at home and abroad, and lived in the face of day without condescending to conceal any thing, without fearing even to betray his weaknesses; either from the pride of hereditary autocracy, which did not deign to put constraint upon itself in the presence of slaves; or from a coarse frankness of manners; or, rather, from an excessive confidence in the rights which his genius gave to him, and a persuasion that the great benefits which he conferred on his empire were sufficient to redeem all his faults.

In a word, he lived publicly, because he regarded himself as living only for the public good.

And it must be owned that, more than any other despot, if he could say, “the state! I am the state!” it was be-

cause, instead of seeing only himself in the state, the state, on the contrary, was every thing in his eyes.

Did he overcome nature; it was not that he might build gigantic palaces; he never dwelt in them: it was that he might give to Russia a military and commercial city. If he did violence to the elements, his object was not to gratify his senses with coolness and alien waters, but to open to the Russian vessels, and from the north to the south of his empire, a road across the widely-extended plains of the Muscovite territory. His palaces were ports, fortresses, ships; they had either been founded or built by his own hands, or taken by himself from the enemy; and he himself inhabited, defended, or commanded them.

If, at a vast expense, he traced out roads, they were not those of sumptuous and useless parks, but those of his country, which he was the first to divide by versts, and on which he established post-houses and inns.

At the same time that he displayed magnificence in disbursements for general utility, he did not ruin the state by making a shameless luxury blaze abroad to the world the innumerable errors of his animal passions, which his herculean strength may account for, but cannot excuse.

His ways and his manners, it is true, were unpolished, but they were simple, frank, and natural; like those of every man who has a great end in view, who presses onward to it with a resolute and straight-forward spirit, and all whose faculties, in order to attain it, rise above the pompous littlenesses of pride and of vanity.

In his humble abode at Petersburg, an abode which a mere artizan would think hardly good enough for himself, a bed, a chair, a table, a lathe, and some books, formed the whole of the furniture.

When he was not at home, the deck of a ship, the floor of a hut, or the bare ground, served him as a bed; now

and then straw, when he could get it; if not, he leaned his head on the officer who attended upon him, who lay across under it, and whose business it was to remain in that position as motionless as the bolster which he represented.

Everything in him was hostile to luxury, and looked to the useful: his clothes were plain, and even of a coarse cloth calculated to wear well; his shoes, which were solid and clumsy, were frequently mended.

At his table, which was usually a frugal one,* nothing came amiss to him, except fish, which this naval prince could never bear. His habitual food, that which he preferred, was such as was eaten by the people. He ate little, but often, wherever he might chance to be, and no matter with whom.

He drank, however, to excess, from habit, from taste, perhaps even from vanity. Deplorable orgies, but less frequent than they are supposed to have been, where he was too often seen overcome by a shameful or a furious intoxication, but where, still oftener, proving himself more powerful than his excesses, he kept his senses, and patiently bore the rash language which intemperance prompted to his convivial companions.

His court, at common times, consisted only of a few officers to convey his orders; luxury was banished from it by sumptuary laws: no plate was seen there. He waited upon himself, rose at four in the morning, and lighted his fire with his own hands.

Pitre was his usual signature. When the labours of government were over for the day, he amused himself by corresponding with the most eminent European astronomers, and with the geographers whom he had sent into all

* See Stœhlin, Louville, &c.

his provinces, by tracing maps and plans, and by becoming the most skilful turner in his empire.

He himself translated the principles of that trade, those of architecture by Leclerc, and the art of constructing canal-locks and foundries. He also ordered the translation of numbers of useful books into Russian. If in any of these versions, as happened with respect to that of Puffendorf, the translator modified passages which were severe upon the Russian nation, Peter made them be given literally, and, reprimanding the translator, he exclaimed, "that he did not want to flatter his subjects, but to instruct them, and, especially, to show them what they had been, and what foreigners thought of them, that he might stimulate them to change, by their exertions, the opinion of Europe."

A multitude of memoirs, notes, and projects, written with his own hand, are still in existence; the style is concise, picturesque, and energetic; the reasoning just and close; the ideas striking; they embrace the whole world; they point out the major part of the conquests of every kind which Russia has achieved since his time, and others even, to which the daring genius of that empire has not yet ventured to aspire.

And yet, like Charlemagne and Napoleon, (two colossuses so predominant, that ten ages of history between them seem to shrink into littleness,) this genius of vast and collected masses delighted to enter into the minutest details; like them, at a distance of five hundred leagues from home, and amidst the impulse which he was giving to the whole world, he was seen, in his letters, to manifest an interest with respect to the most trivial circumstances relative to his gardens and to the furnishing of his house!

Such were his habits at home; when he went out, it

was generally on foot, or in a hackney-coach, and he sometimes borrowed of the first passer-by the money to pay his fare. He daily spent several hours at the senate, but particularly at the Admiralty ; after which, and always followed, like the great Frederick, by a favourite dog, he went, alone and without guards, to mingle among his people : preferring the society of foreign and Russian traders and sailors, especially the Dutch, from whom he could scarcely be distinguished by his dress. There, without ceremony, he took a part in their business, their pleasures, and their conversation, questioning them continually, and gaining knowledge from their replies.

Many a time was he seen working with his own hands in the manufactories which he had established ! It is known that he often offered himself to pilot the European vessels which came to Cronstadt, and that he received, like other pilots, the pay of a service which he considered as an honour, and which he was desirous to render honourable.

Another time, having been compelled by the state of his health to stop at a forge, he for some hours became a smith. Nor let it be supposed that there was any thing puerile in this ; for in him, every thing, even to the major part of his most trifling actions, tended to a great purpose. For this reason, on his return to Moscow, he went to the master of the forge, and enquired what he paid his workmen. “ Well, then ! ” said he, “ I, at that rate, have earned eight altins (about thirteen pence) and I am come for the money.” Having received it, he added, that, “ with this sum he would buy himself a new pair of shoes, of which he was in great want.” This was very true ; and he hastened to the market to make his purchase, which he afterwards felt a pleasure in wearing. “ See what I earned by the sweat of my brow,” said he

to his courtiers; thus priding himself on the fruits of his labour, in the eyes of a nobility whom he wished to cure of the Oriental and haughty indolence with which they were imbued.

It may well be believed that such a prince, so opposite to all the vanities of the proud Ivans, his predecessors, treated with contempt the pompous etiquette of their diplomatic ceremonies; accordingly, he gave his first audience to the Austrian ambassador at five in the morning, and amidst the confusion of setting to rights his cabinet of natural history. As to the Prussian minister, he, with his credentials, had no other mode of reaching the Tzar, except by going on board of a vessel, and even up to the topsail of the mainmast, where the Emperor was busily engaged: it is true, however, that Peter did not compel the minister to ascend to him, the Prussian envoy having pleaded his want of practice as an excuse for declining this aerial reception.

In fact, the honour of sharing in his occupations, and even in his pleasures, was not without danger. They often consisted in braving the storm; and when all the heads around him, excepting that of Catherine, were almost deprived of their senses, he would take the helm, and with a steady eye, a firm hand, and an unfaltering voice, avert the danger, and give life again to the crew, whom death seemed to have already seized.

It is known, nevertheless, that he was born with a horror of water, which any other person would have believed to be unconquerable; but he surmounted it by habit, his genius having availed itself of this second nature to subdue the first.

And who is there who will venture to affirm that so much fearlessness did not spring, as his contemporaries*

See Fontenelle.

supposed it to do, from a mysterious cause? In 1714, in the midst of a horrible tempest, when he saved his fleet, as Cæsar saved his army, by intrusting his fate to a frail bark, did he not reply to those about him, who were alarmed at such rashness, "that the Tzar Peter could not be drowned; that a Russian sovereign would never perish in the water! But," added he, "you Russians, you do not believe in predestination!" As though he alone, so calm amidst so many men who thought him lost, had been in the secret of destiny: whether this confidence arise from the power of instinct, in such singular beings, for all have given belief to their presentiments, or that, in reality, being the chosen instruments of Heaven, they approximate more nearly to it than other men.

CHAPTER II.

BUT in a mind of such a fervid character, and which was subject to the influence of every species of intoxication, how terrible must have been the first bursts of passion! Some examples we have seen: neither his physicians, whom he sent to the victims of his rage, nor the attentions which he paid to them himself, nor his repentance, especially when his violence had arisen from error or drunkenness, were at all times sufficient. They were unavailing to a French architect, whom he had unjustly struck, and who could not survive the insult.

And, nevertheless, in the customary course of life of this passionate master, we are astonished by the indulgent patience which he manifested towards all projects that had a useful end in view. We know with what attention he

caused all the experiments to be made in his presence ; with what kindness he rewarded the authors, and even, not unfrequently, when they had deceived themselves. He wished, he said, to encourage them in search of something better, and he endeavoured to put them in the right way, by explaining to them with a beneficent mildness the causes of their mistake.

It was with similar consistency, if not with the same mildness, that, at the residence of his daughters, or the palace of the ostentatious Mentzikof, he enforced, by example, his regulations with respect to society : a singular code, by which society, broken up by the tyrants of the first race, was re-established on a new basis.

In these parties, where truth often met his ear without offending it, he was particularly indignant against that treacherous slander, which is the resource of empty minds, and of that criminal vanity which is anxious to shine at any cost—the vile talent of still more detestable court flatterers. We are told that, on one occasion, a person about him being guilty of this disgraceful vice, he interrupted him by the following words, full of simple and antique beauty : “ Surely you must have seen something good in the man you are slandering, and cannot you tell us that ? ”

It was also the same chief, so inflexible, so absolute, and whose military code was so terrible, who behaved like the equal of his meanest soldiers, when he was not acting in the character of their commander. He accepted their invitations as readily as those of the highest nobles of his court, repulsing no one, and, as we are told by his daughter, “ standing godfather as often as he was asked.” There, without either feeling or inspiring constraint, seated at their humble repasts, he seemed to be more gratified than at the most brilliant entertainments : “ then,” to use the

very words of the Empress Elizabeth, “a kiss given to the lying-in woman, and a ducat put under the bolster, was all, and that gave satisfaction.”

A sovereign of such popular manners was no longer one of those *terrestrial deities*, as the national historians denominate their ancient tzars, when they relate that, far from mingling familiarly with their subjects, these despots of Tartar manners, frightened them with their rare and formidable presence. It seems, on the contrary, that, too great not to despise this haughty invisibility, Peter must rather have reminded his contemporaries of the demi-gods of the heroic ages, the inventors of arts, and the conquerors of monsters, or, in other words, of barbarism.

And, in fact, like those rugged heroes, confiding in his colossal stature, and his almost supernatural strength, he was seen to traverse alone, but with a still nobler purpose, the wildest countries. Like them, too, he combated and overcame the robbers whom he there met with; and, like Cæsar, that other deified great man, he also ransomed his life and liberty from their hands.

Thus, he one day, on a lonely road, found himself unexpectedly engaged with eight villains, whose vehicle stopped his; but, with a vigorous arm, the hero seized one of them by the hair, pulled him out from amidst his companions, and dragged him to a place of safety, where he compelled him to disclose the haunt of his accomplices.

On another occasion, being surprised by a more numerous troop of them, he, with a sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other, held them at bay. “I am the Tzar,” he exclaimed; “what do you require of me?” But, this time, he was forced to capitulate: he even remained in the power of the banditti, till one of them returned from the neighbouring city with his ransom, for the payment of which he had been obliged to give a written order.

These robbers were masters of the highways in open day, and they seized upon the towns, and even upon Moscow itself, as soon as the sun set.* In some weeks, there were found in the streets of that capital no less than sixty of its inhabitants who had been murdered. Barri-
cades were obliged to be erected. The ferocious Romadonsky conquered these ruffians by surpassing them in cruelty: he had them hunted down like wild beasts; then he sentenced them, after his manner, in a moment, with a single word, without appeal, always to death, and without ever pardoning. He hung them up alive, by hooks through their sides, two hundred at a time, and left them to expire thus, in the most horrible agony, in the public roads.

This inundation of criminals had its source in the weight of the taxes, and the severity of the compulsory labour and of the recruiting; in the underhand opposition of the nobles and the priests; and, lastly, in general discontent. For Peter the Great, though fortunate abroad, was unfortunate at home: this was the natural effect of a life in which the present was always sacrificed to the future, and private interests to the general interest.

He was fortunate in glory, in conquests, and in the success of his great views relative to order, industry, and commerce; and unfortunate in the interior of his empire, and even in the bosom of his family, by the obstinate opposition and by the censures of his subjects and his relations, or by their vices.

Accordingly, in the imperial domestic circle, as is the case in many private domestic circles, his only consolation was his daughters: whether it be that the difference of sexes, their reciprocal bias, and the natural subjection of the one sex to the other, produce a sweeter sympathy be-

* See The Foreign Resident.

tween daughters and a father ; or that, by a law of nature, which some profound or merely ingenious observers imagine they have discovered, the mind and disposition, as well as the form of a being, whatever may be the species, generally bear a closer resemblance to those of the parent from which it differs in sex.

However this may be, it is certain that, very unlike the son of Peter the Great, his daughters, Anne and Elizabeth, were docile to all the wishes of their father. The Princess Anne, especially, handsome and majestic like him, had his keen and ready judgment, his firm and decided character, and his intrepid presence of mind, but without his savage harshness ; for in her every thing had been softened down by an education which he himself superintended. She and her sister knew four foreign languages. When their court was assembled at the residence of the Princess Natalia, their aunt, who was herself the author of the first Russian theatrical piece, we are assured, by a foreign minister, that a spectator might, particularly as to what he saw, have imagined himself to be in a London or Parisian society.

The Tzar, terrible as he was to a son who rebelled against civilization, came every day to these princesses, to enquire how they proceeded with their studies. Whenever he found that they had increased their stock of knowledge, he kissed them on the forehead, and rewarded them, exclaiming, at the same time, “ that they were very fortunate ; that he envied them their education ; and that he would give one of his fingers to have had the same advantage that they had ! ” For he lived on the most affectionate terms with his daughters ; who, at a subsequent period, delighted to tell of his many acts of kindness ; and it is said that the youthful Natalia, who died a few days after him, was unable to survive his loss.

CHAPTER III.

BUT, along with this domestic consolation of the great man, what a host of private sorrows ! A sister, his guardian, but the usurper of his rights, the murderer of his relations by the mother's side, the assassin of his infancy and his youth, and a pertinacious conspirator ; a second sister, the accomplice of the elder ; a first wife, who was an enemy and divorced ; a rebellious son, whose delight it was to be the hope of the blind hatred of the Muscovites against his parent, and whom it was necessary to sacrifice to the regeneration of the empire ! Nor was this all : seven other children, of whom five were sons, his dearest hope, all died in the birth, or shortly after ; not one was left to him, to perpetuate, in a successor formed by himself, his magnificent and laborious creations !

On the other hand, his dearest friends, his pupils, the sharers in his toils, were accused and convicted of speculation ; he was obliged to tear them from his heart, or from his eyes, some by contempt, others by banishment, and several even by the scaffold. Add to this, purblind subjects, who cursed him for his purpose as well as for his means. With the exception of a few natives, he had, in the midst of his people, no one on his side but foreigners, and gained only an admiration which was without affection and without gratitude.

Lastly, a horrible disease arose, to terminate his illustrious life by torments dreadful enough, perhaps, to expiate those with which he had punished the enemies of his system.

These were misfortunes which, in a greater or less degree, were deserved, as all the misfortunes of human kind are. Peter brought on himself this horrible disease by a debauchery which occasions such cruel sufferings as serve rather to make existence hateful than to correct it; the censure of his subjects, by his despotic violence, which too often effected good by means of evil; and the loss of so many children, by the excess of toil which he made their mother endure, even when in a state of pregnancy: there being nothing so wearisome to those about them, no less than to nations, as these ever-indefatigable great men.

As to the enmity of his first wife, it is said to have originated in the jealousy with which the criminal fondness of the Tzar for Anne de Moens inspired that princess: a fatal source! whence, subsequently, sprung the obstinate aversion of a son, who was led away by the rage of a divorced mother, and the angry advice of his maternal relatives; then, all the domestic dissensions that followed; and lastly, even the terrible catastrophe, the frightful parricide, which twenty years later, stained the whole of his reign with blood. A melancholy result of a first act of infidelity: so fertile are the seeds of evil, and, whatever the lax morality of the world may say, so durable and severe are the consequences of a single fault.

This remark acquires a still more terrific strength, when we find that, after so many bitter fruits, the bitterest that a fault of this nature could produce, the fatal fertility of this root of evil was not yet exhausted. In fact, after a lapse of twenty-five years, and by a natural result of that criminal attachment, the brother of Anne de Moens was about the person of the Tzar, and was the chamberlain of Catherine; it was by him that the punishment was to be consummated; that adultery was to be avenged by adultery; it was to him, that the second wife of Peter was to

sacrifice that prince, to the brother of the woman to whom he had sacrificed the first wife.

The blow was rendered more painful to him, by his being betrayed at the moment when he had filled up the measure of his benefits. And by whom betrayed? by that Livonian servant who, in 1702, was married to a Swedish dragoon, who, on the same day, became the slave of a Russian general, and, soon after, of Mentzikof. She, the secret mistress of the Tzar in 1703; his avowed mistress in 1705; whom, in 1707, he had privately made his wife, and in 1711 had publicly acknowledged as such. She for whom, in 1714, he created the order of St. Catherine, in remembrance of the crisis on the Pruth, when, as the grateful prince confessed, "Catherine did not act like a woman, but like a man."

It was for her also, that, in 1722, he had subverted the order of direct succession, to which Russia was indebted for its being freed from the Tartar yoke; in its place he had substituted, under a legal form, the right of the Tzar to choose his successor, to revoke his choice, and to make a new one; a right which, like all others, is included in autocracy, and which Ivan III. was aware of when, in 1498, two hundred and eighty years before this period, he wrote to the Pskovians, "Am I not, then, at liberty to act as I please? I will give Russia to whomsoever I think proper, and I command you to obey."

But let us listen to the great man himself, when he declares, "that as the obstinate rebellion of Alexis could be accounted for only by the imprescriptible right which that prince, who had the wickedness of Absalom, supposed that he had to the throne, it was indispensable to give to the sovereign the same authority over his son as a private individual possessed over his children." He then adduces the wife of Isaac, and especially Ivan III.

“ who collected into one body the scattered members of the country, and who, fearing to see his work destroyed by his descendants, disinherited one of them, chose another, and afterwards restored the former, according to his own good pleasure, and without paying any attention to the law of primogeniture !”

It was in 1722 that Peter the Great thus expressed himself when he had only daughters left, and when a son of Alexis was still living. By thus proclaiming the right of the Tzars to dispose of the empire, he prepared his subjects to slight the claims of his grandson, the child of his victim ; and, at the same time, held out to them, as his successor, Catherine the First, with all her circle of native and foreign grandees. By this means, he particularly designed to uphold his work of civilization, and to save it from the hands of his first divorced wife, who was the grandmother of the heir to the throne, and whom he dreaded as a guardian.

He was actuated by the same kind of policy when, in 1724, after his return from the hot-baths of Olonetz, which a violent attack of strangury had compelled him to visit, he issued a manifesto, announcing the coronation of Catherine. This was an unexampled event in Russia, where no woman had ever been crowned. This act tacitly gave the right of succeeding him to the companion of his labours, and consequently to his daughters ; to princesses brought up in the modern arts ; in a word, to the sex which has the greatest degree of interest in civilization and in its progress. “ This,” said the Tzar, as he showed the new crown ; “ this confers on Catherine the right of, perhaps, one day reigning : she saved the empire on the banks of the Pruth, and she will, no doubt, be able to maintain all our useful establishments.” *

* Kamensky, *The Age of Peter the Great*.

At the same time, the grateful prince wished that the felicity and splendour of this important day should be doubled, by the betrothing of his daughter Anne to the Duke of Holstein. At length, before the eyes of all Russia, he himself placed the diadem on the brow of Catherine, and the slave of Marienburg became the sharer of his throne!

CHAPTER IV.

THIS coronation was closely followed by ingratitude; and, whether it were from the weakness natural to the sex, or that even ingratitude requires the support of hope, certain it is that Catherine forgot her obligations as soon as there was no longer any thing to be expected from her benefactor.

In reality, up to this day, she had had every thing to hope from the life of the Tzar; henceforth, it was his death alone that could raise her higher, and she is said to have wished for it: even more is said! One thing is undeniable; that she then violated her conjugal fidelity.

Perhaps in the crime of this crowned German slave there was nothing more than a lightness of manners which was worthy of her origin; perhaps, too, as is asserted, her chamberlain Moens was really seductive; but so it was, that, either from her being fired by an ambition of which she is proved not to have been destitute, or from her being tired of her benefactor's paroxysms of violence, her repugnance to Peter increased, and she allowed it to become visible.

The Tzar perceived it; his temper became more soured, his mind had worn out his body, and a secret, cruel, and even mortal malady increased his natural irritability; from that internal justice which we never fail to exercise on ourselves, becoming more suspicious in proportion as he was conscious of being less bearable, he suspected the adulteress, and set spies upon her.

The court was then at Peterhof; Prince Repnin, president of the war department, slept not far from the Tzar; it was two o'clock in the morning; all at once the door of the marshal was violently thrown open, and he was startled up by abrupt and hasty footsteps: he looked round in astonishment; it was Peter the Great; the monarch was standing by the bedside; his eyes sparkled with rage, and all his features were distorted with convulsive fury. Repnin tells us,* that at the sight of that terrible aspect he was appalled, gave himself up for lost, and remained motionless; but his master, with a broken and panting voice, exclaimed to him, "Get up! speak to me! there's no need to dress yourself;" and the trembling marshal obeyed.

It was then he learned, that, but the instant before, guided by too faithful a report, the Tzar had suddenly entered Catherine's apartment; that the crime is revealed! the ingratitude proved! that at day-break the empress shall lose her head! that the emperor is resolved!

The marshal afterwards declared that, gradually recovering his voice, he agreed that such a monstrous act of treachery was horrible, but that he reminded his master, of the crime being as yet known to no one, and of the impolicy of making it public: that then, growing bolder, he dared to call to recollection the massacre of the Strelitz, and

* See Leclerc, Coxe, Levesque.

that every subsequent year had been ensanguined by executions ; that, in fine, after the imprisonment of his sister, the condemning of his son to death, and the scourging and imprisonment of his first wife, if he should likewise cut off the head of his second, Europe would no longer look upon him in any other light than that of a ferocious prince, who thirsted for the blood of his subjects and even of those who were a part of himself.

He added that, besides, the Tzar might have satisfaction by giving up Moens to the sword of the law upon other charges ; and that, as to the Empress, he could find the means of ridding himself of her, without any prejudice to his glory.

While Repnin was thus advising, the Tzar, who stood motionless before him, gazed upon him intently and wildly, and kept a gloomy silence. But, in a short time, as was the case when he was labouring under strong emotions, his head was twisted to the left side, and his swollen features became convulsively contracted ; signs of the terrible struggle by which he was tortured. And yet the excessive working of his mind held his body in a state of frightful immovability.

At length, he precipitately rushed out of the chamber into the adjoining room. For two whole hours he hastily paced it ; then, suddenly entering again like a man who had made up his mind, he said to Repnin, “ Moens shall die immediately ! I will watch the Empress so closely that her first slip shall cost her life ! ”

He then went away ; and, on the following morning, the head of Moens, who was accused of peculation, was brought to the block ; his two sons were degraded, and were sent to a great distance, on the Persian frontier, as private soldiers. At the same time, his sister, who was an accom-

plice in the crime, and a favourite of Catherine, received the knout, and was banished to Siberia, and her property was confiscated. It is even said, that the terrible Tzar led his guilty consort to look at the bleeding head of her lover, and that he attentively watched her countenance, but that, fortunately, her downcast eyes did not betray grief. Repnin adds that, from that dreadful night till his death, Peter never more spoke to the Empress except in public, and that, in his dwelling, he always remained separate from her.

As his death took place but a few months after, some have suspected Catherine to have been the author of it; without taking into consideration the too well-known malady of the great man, without weighing the numerous facts, and how much faster such heroes seem to live, without reflecting that not one of them has run much more than half the career allowed to other men, they have accused the Empress.

For the reputation of Catherine as well as of Mentzikof, both of whom had risen from so low a station, and had always mutually supported each other to attain so high a rank near the Tzar, it is undoubtedly a double misfortune, that both of them should have lost his good opinion, just before his death, the one by malversation, and the other by adultery. In fact, both of them had seen themselves supplanted in his favour; the one, it is said, by a Princess Cantemir, who was patronized by Jaguchinsky; the other, by that Jaguchinsky, the *eye of the Tzar*.

It was in 1722 that Peter gave him this appellation; when, on his departure for Persia, he entrusted the management of the government to this new favourite, who trod so closely on the footsteps of Mentzikof. Hence, the envy of Mentzikof, and the jealousy of Catherine: to which, after the disclosure of her adultery, must be added,

a crown to be preserved, and the exile and punishment of a favourite, and the death of a lover, to be avenged; and lastly, the pressing necessity of escaping by a second crime from reproach, and from the perpetual danger of a threatening presence.

Such were the surmises of contemporaries, prompted either by divine justice, which often punishes a known crime only by the gratuitous suspicion of another crime; or by the too customary propensity of common minds to imagine that the premature death of great princes cannot be a natural event. It seems, in fact, that in consequence of an inherent tendency in the human race to deify all that they fear, the multitude find it difficult to conceive that those beings whom they do not consider as belonging to nature, can die naturally; they cannot persuade themselves that so much life, so vast a life, on which all others seem to depend, can possibly be extinguished by the mere accidents of war or disease, like that of the commonplace beings by whom it is surrounded.

CHAPTER V.

BUT it is at length necessary to part from this great man; perhaps, in my reluctance to arrive at this last moment, I may have overloaded these pages with minute circumstances. In truth, feasting on the recollections of his contemporaries, deeply impressed with the perusal of them, with my eyes sometimes on the map of the empire which he regenerated, and sometimes on the faithful representation of his features, many a time, for several years

back; have I seemed to be living with him. In the reveries of my fancy, retrograding into the past, making my existence contemporaneous with his in the land which he ruled and which I visited with another colossus, how often have I pictured myself as one of the foreign partners of his toils, interested in the success of his great enterprise, loving and admiring him in his object, and feeling indignant at the obstacles which he met with, and at those which he himself created; and, lastly, enjoying with transport his noble actions, and his great and vigorous qualities, or bearing with his errors, and manifesting hatred of his vices!

He was only fifty-two years of age. But to a mind which was vast enough to animate the whole of a great people, a single body, however robust it might be, could not long suffice.

His life had been nothing but one protracted and violent excess of labour, mingled with other excesses. In 1722, a secret malady attacked him,* but he said nothing about it; and it was during that same year, and in spite of the disease, that he achieved the conquest of the three Persian provinces, which he added for a while to his empire. He shared in the fatigues of his meanest soldiers, and in their coarse food. He marched, as they did, on foot, under a burning sun, in a deep and heated sand, in the midst of a thick dust, and frequently without water to quench the thirst during whole days. And yet he constantly refused to make use of Catherine's carriage; she herself several times quitted it, to fill it with soldiers who were dying of heat and fatigue.

His disease, meanwhile, grew worse. This internal enemy, which he despised, gained ground and increased while, in 1723, attending only to his foreign but much

* The strangury.

less dangerous enemies, he retained the Cossacks in their fidelity by the presence of sixty thousand men; bridled the Turks by threatening negotiations, such as must be carried on with those barbarians; and soaring from the Caspian to the Baltic, from a fiery to a frozen sea, passed again in triumph before Romanodovsky, at Moscow, still in a subordinate rank; gave him an account of his expedition; and then, with the authority of a master, repressed the new malversations of his vice-chancellor, and those of Mentzikof.

He had the courage still to dissemble his sufferings while, from on board of the fleet which he had fitted out, he dictated to Stockholm the acknowledgment of the nephew of Charles XII. as Prince of Sweden; to Denmark, that of the rights of the same prince, his future son-in-law, to the duchy of Holstein; and, finally, compelled Copenhagen to recognise himself as Emperor. But as, at the same time, in order to hide his internal decline, and not afford his enemies an irksome joy, or even a dangerous hope, he would not drop any of his habits, his pains became every day more excruciating.

At length, he could no longer endure them, but it was only to one of his servants that he entrusted the secret; he directed him to obtain advice as if for some one else; he would not even consult his court physician, of so much importance did he consider it not to be fathomed. It was then that he went to the hot baths of Olonetz; and that, being better on his return, he, on the 7th of May, 1724, placed the crown on the head of Catherine.

But, whether it were, that in these entertainments, he was guilty of some excess, or, as his surgeon* affirms, his disease had only been palliated by the first and obscure consultation, or that, on his discovering the treason of the

* Paulson.

Empress, the violence of his anger had aggravated his case; certain it is, that subsequent to the coronation, and but a few days after the fatal discovery, his horrible malady broke out with additional fury.

All on a sudden, Petersburg learned, that the life of its founder was in danger; next, that nothing but a horrible operation could save him; then, that he had undergone it, but with such agony, that he had entirely blackened the bodies of the operating surgeons, by the forcible manner in which he grasped them. Lastly, it heard, that its Tzar was stretched, deprived of all strength, on a bed of pain, where, for three months, it was doubtful whether he would die of his disease, or of the means which were employed to cure him.

But his vigorous constitution again got the better. He was restored to life, and notwithstanding the most serious statements of the danger, angry to have been so long a captive, he immediately returned to his creations.

Munnich, whose genius was in unison with his own, called for his presence in those marshes, where intrigue and ignorance had for so many years given a wrong direction to the famous Ladoga Canal; the canal which was to be the feeder of Petersburg, the junction of the waters of Northern Asia and of Europe, the connecting link between two worlds.

Autumn, meanwhile, began,* the autumn of the Russians; but the Tzar took no thought of it. For a whole month, that of October, he traversed these filthy marshes. His mind, which was yet strong and entire, dragged into this fetid bog his suffering body, enfeebled and already bent; every thing about him gave signs of pain, except his eagle glance, which preserved its imperious liveliness, and was darted over the whole of this swampy country.

* 1724.

“ This canal,” exclaimed he, “ will feed Petersburg and Cronstadt, furnish materials for their structures, convey thither all the productions of the empire, and render prosperous the commerce of Russia with the rest of Europe.”

He, however, blamed the line which had been adopted; and addressing himself to the unskilful engineer, who was protected by his favourites, “ Pisarev,” said he, “ there are two kinds of faults; the one, when we err from ignorance; the other, which is more inexcusable, when we do not make use of our five senses. Why are not the banks of this canal prevented from giving way? why are there so many windings? Where are the hills which you made an objection? Truly, you are an absolute knave!” Then, turning to Munnich, of whose plans he approved, he called him “ his friend,” and declared that, “ in him, he had found the man who would complete this great work, and that his labours had cured him.” He put under his orders twenty-five thousand men and the senate; and then, at length, quitted this lifeless spot, which is now so full of life, breathed into it by the last breath of his immortal genius.

The same ardour impelled him to the extremity of Lake Ilmen, and then to the salt-works of Starai Roussa. He bent his course at length towards Petersburg; but, hurried away by his destiny, which was about to make him the victim of that humanity he had too often outraged, he went on, without stopping, to Finland; he was desirous to visit his forges there; in a word, to have again examined every thing: the manufactories of arms, the establishments for the benefit of commerce, arts, and sciences, whence is derived the prosperity of nations, and whence spring also, the glories of peace, and the glories of war.

He entered the port of Lachta, on the 5th of November. The weather was gloomy, the air keen and cold, the sea rough, swelling, and wearisome; but the Tzar at length landed. He was on the point of reaching the abode prepared for him, when, casting towards the harbour one of those inquisitive and penetrating glances which nothing could escape, he perceived a small vessel, full of soldiers and sailors, which had struck upon a shoal. He saw that the unfortunate men were confused by fear; and, in the first instance, approaching the water's edge, he called out to them, and told them what was necessary to be done to save themselves; but he exerted himself in vain, for his voice was drowned by the clamours of the sufferers and the roaring of the waves. Those whom he sent to assist them were in fear of their own lives, and made but fruitless efforts. Then, forgetting all the danger that he ran, he took his resolution at once, and jumped into a skiff. As he could not approach the shoal with it, he leaped into the sea, reached the stranded vessel, saved the passengers, and conveyed them to the shore, where he lavished on them the kindest attentions.

But in the middle of the same night, and while Peter the Great was enjoying the pleasure of having performed a noble action, his disease again attacked him; a burning fever fired his blood; the strangury and all his former pangs seized upon the tenderest parts of his body. He was removed to Petersburgh. There, living always more for his country than for himself, while his alarmed physicians predicted inflammation and its mortal consequences, he did not suspend his labours; his mind, stronger than such pungent agony, still watched over his empire; and even when pain seemed his only connecting link with earth, and he was about to quit the world, he strove to give a new world to Russia.

It was then that Behring received, from the monarch's own hand, those second instructions which were to extend to America the empire of the Russians; an empire which their Tzar had never ceased to aggrandize, and far more by the conquests of commerce and the arts, than by those of war. For two months longer, a multitude of other instructions and regulations bear witness to his constant solicitude for the welfare of his people. He did still more: this mode of reigning by ordinances, and by his mind alone, did not satisfy him; he wished to combine with it the execution, to see every thing with his own eyes. He was to pause only to die; and his thus lavishing his own person, without bestowing a thought on it, is his best excuse for his having spared others so little.

This was the reason why, on the 17th of January, 1725, the day of the ceremony of blessing the water, he braved the severity of the weather and of illness; and, for the last time, commanding by example, was desirous to give that of piety which, however, he well knew how to distinguish from superstition, its most pernicious and formidable enemy.

But, on the following day, either from the effect of this excess of piety,* or from his having indulged in excess of some other kind,† a tightness seized his chest, an increasing fever burnt him up, and he was tortured by an obstinate and agonizing suppression of urine. He still strove to struggle against his disease, and rise superior to pain, the last monster which this dying Hercules sought to conquer; but it triumphed, and he fell hopeless on his bed of death.

The palace was thrown into alarm; couriers were dis-

* According to Soethlin, &c.

† According to some unpublished Memoirs, and some works which have been printed.

patched to Leyden and to Berlin to obtain the best advice. All the physicians of Petersburg were summoned round the couch, where lay the object of so many recollections, and of so many hopes of glory and national prosperity. There, while his medical attendants were fourteen days employing the terrible means which were meant to relieve, but which are said to have ended him, he sometimes filled the palace with the cries which his sufferings extorted, and at other times, indignant at his involuntary weakness, exclaimed that “in him might plainly be seen what a wretched animal is man !”

At length, on the 26th of January, he became resigned ; he called upon Heaven, in a loud voice, and received the last consolations of religion ; and, either from Christian humility, or the remorse of a dying man, or rather, perhaps, in conformity to an ancient usage, which is peculiar to Russia, he ordered his debts to be paid, and the prisoners to be released. “I dare hope,” said he, at the same time, “that God will look upon me with a merciful eye, for all the good that I have done to my country !”

Then, though he was enduring worse than a thousand deaths for two whole days, but possessing still the same ardour for civilization, and the same firmness with which he had lived, the Tzar, in the short intervals which pain allowed him, laid his injunctions on Catherine to protect his Academy of Sciences, and to invite to it the learned men of Europe. He then pointed out Ostermann to her in the following words :—“Russia cannot do without him ; he is the only man who knows her real interests.” After this, he settled the time during which mourning for him should be worn.

He now wished to write his last will ; but the deceitful calm of a partial death, which succeeded to his pangs, had deceived him as to his remaining strength. His trembling

and already nerveless hand could form nothing on the paper but illegible marks; he himself could read no more than these three words,—“ Give all to” He then ordered the Princess Anne, his favourite daughter, to be sent for instantly; but by the time she could come, the voice as well as the hand and left side of her father were gone. In the meanwhile he had endeavoured, but in vain, to finish what he had begun; the mind was yet entire, but it had no longer any means of communicating with the material world. This sovereign, so potent, still living in the midst of his people, surrounded by his household, and in the arms of his family, was, nevertheless, insulated from all; he was separated from them, and stood alone, battling with death, against which he struggled during fifteen hours of horrible agony.

At length, on the 28th of January, about four in the morning, his eyes closed for ever; and thus, at the very same hour when he was every day accustomed to awake from other sleep than this, and resume the toils of his empire, he closed forty-three years of a reign, and fifty-two years of a life, by which Russia still lives. It is to that life that she owes the first blaze of her glory, and all the reflections of it: great lives being those which do not expire with one man, but which seem to descend to and be repeated in a long series of successors—like those splendid works of genius, which are creative of so many others.*

* See the note (5) at the end of the Volume.

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORIANS of the nineteenth century, while we detest the violent acts of this prince, why should we be astonished at his despotism? Who was there who could then teach him, that to be truly liberal or moral is the same thing? But of what consequence is it, that he was ignorant that morality calls for the establishment of liberty, as being the best possible means of securing the general welfare? All that he did for that welfare, or, in other words, for the glory, the instruction, and the prosperity of his empire, was it not beneficial to that liberty, of which neither himself nor his people were yet worthy? Thus, without being aware of it, Peter the Great did more for liberty than all the dreams of liberalism have since fancied that he ought to have done! His people are indebted to him for their first and most difficult step towards their future emancipation. What matters, then, his abhorrence of the word, when he laboured so much for the thing? Since despotism was necessary there, how could he better employ it?

If he carried matters too far, if he often deemed it just to inflict on his enemies all the evil which they wished to him, and to treat his country like a conquest in order to conquer it to civilization; in a word, if he overcame in his Russians their barbarous manners by dint of the barbarism which still remained in himself; the fault must be attributed to his education, to the age in which he lived, and to the circumstance of a degree of power being requisite here which has never been found to exist in man without being pushed to excess.

It was in this hyperborean land, where a freezing temperature is adverse to social intercourse, by confining each individual within his own limits ; in these humid and cold regions, where every kind of strength and superiority seems as though it ought to exert itself only to escape from them, to conquer a milder climate under a distant sky ; it was here that this citizen despot, so familiar, so accessible, so enamoured of truth—full of the pride of noble actions, and endowed with admirable sagacity, with boundless zeal, and with sleepless activity, devoted himself, in order to transform this barbarous and desolating nature into an enlightened and productive nature.

Let thanks be paid to him, since he changed into a source of light that source of ignorance, whence the barbarism of the middle age had flowed in torrents over the face of Europe, ingulphing the civilization of ancient times. Never again will burst forth from those countries the Attilas, the Hermanrics, “ the scourges of God and of mankind ! ” Peter the Great has called forth there the lustre of the Scheremetefs, the Apraxins, the Mentzikofs, the Tolstoys, the Schuvalofs, the Ostermanns, the Rumianzofs, and the numerous band of other names, till then unknown, but of which, since that epoch, the European aristocracy has been proud.

In that great creation, as at the period of that of the world, we seem to behold all these men of Russian civilization included in one man ! they seem as though they sprung from him, to civilize the empire with that unity, that order, that concordant motion, which manifests one common origin ! He himself discerned, trained, or guided them. For, like the major part of the greatest men, he knew how to choose those who were suitable to his purpose ; like them, too, he persisted in his choice, and in his

friendships; either from the tenacity which is natural to all noble hearts in their feelings as well as in their projects, or, rather, from the correctness of their first glance, their superior genius being able instantly to recognize and to draw to them these subordinate geniuses! For what great man has ever yet been seen unsurrounded by great talents? as though, in virtue of an universal law, similar minds had a tendency to unite in the moral order of things, as atoms of the same nature have in the physical order.

Observe how this illustrious prince, strong in his own unaided strength, at the very outset extricated himself from the midst of fifteen millions of men who were enbruted by ten centuries of ignorance and of prejudices; how he darted out of the sphere of the coarse manners in which he was enveloped; and, in a short time, how vigorously he soared above the Egyptian darkness into which his nation was plunged! From that elevation he enlightened and attracted to him the chosen spirits of his people; with these he formed the nucleus of a nation, which thenceforth never ceased to aspire to the light, to proceed in its new and noble career, and to draw after it all the rest of his empire.

In tearing himself, however, from this stupid and obstinate barbarism, he bore with him some fragments of it; but they stained, without eclipsing, the glory which he acquired.

Here, at length, let us stop. And, indeed, how is it possible not to remain mute with admiration, as we contemplate this vast age, which contains a Louis the Great, with his glorious train of divine orators, sublime poets, and celebrated generals! which shows to us that Dutch warrior, who was so often overthrown, yet, as soon as he touched the earth, always rose again, more formidable than

before ! where we venerate the generous Sobieski, the saviour of the empire, the last, and perhaps the greatest of the heroes of the cross ! where we behold the fraternal piety of one of his sons refusing the throne, that he may preserve it to his brother ! and where we witness, too, the gratitude of a Leczinski surviving a benefit and saving the benefactor ! Sublime age ! whence the immortal genius of Newton illumines all the ages which are to come. An age which, far from being exhausted by giving birth to so many great men, closed its reign by producing the two who were the most extraordinary of all.

Does it not seem to have created these two colossuses at once, and within reach of each other, as if to bring them into collision, and thus to close this great epoch by one of the grandest spectacles that time ever displayed to the world ?

One of them is Charles the Twelfth, the last heroic offspring of a family of heroes ; full at the same time of emotion and of inflexibility ! conquering without the ambition of conquests ! loving glory for itself, with that pure love which had always before been deemed an improbability, and sacrificing every thing to it ! The other is the founder, the regenerator of Russia, that giant of the North, whose mind was so vast, that it alone was sufficient to inspire the whole of a mighty nation.

With him terminates this ever-memorable age : an age of wonders ! which was begun by a monarch worthy of a commanding civilization, and closed by a Tzar who was capable of creating it !



NOTES.

NOTE 1. PAGE 12.

THE Varangian names which have come down to us are Scandinavian, and Nestor positively affirms that the Varangians were Russians.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus remarks the difference between the Russian and the Slavonian languages.

The leaders of the people, who, about 862, conquered Novgorod and Kief, were Scandinavians; this is proved by their names. Those leaders gave to their conquests the name of Russia, (See Nestor.) They were, consequently, Russians, and the Russians were Scandinavians.

The Russians who, in 839, accompanied the embassy which was sent by the Greek Emperor Theophilus, to Louis, the son of Charlemagne, were recognized as Normans; and, as Luitprand tells us, were so recognized after a very jealous and minute investigation. Now, the Franks of that period had good reasons for knowing Normans. These Normans complained of the hostile countries and tribes through which they had been obliged to journey before they could reach Byzantium; and they desired to be sent back, *by sea*, from France to their native land.

Ville-Hardouin tells us, that, at the capture of Constantinople, by Baldwin, Earl of Flanders, who was a Crusader, and an ally of the Venetians, the Varangians, or, as he calls them, the Anglians and Danes, repulsed the Latins with their axes. These Varangians formed the body-guard of the emperors of the Lower Empire.

Besides, the ancient wars of the Scandinavians with the northern Slavonians and the Finnish tribes are not unknown to us. The Swedes

made a descent in Esthonia in the fifth century, and often, both before and after. Sturlezon mentions several marriages between the princes and princesses of Suevia and Finland. These attacks and alliances in the north were terminated by a conquest. In 984, we see the Normans masters of Livonia and Esthonia, and the Russian Varangians in possession of all the rest of European Russia.

Did not Rurik commence his conquest by Ladoga and Bielozero? Why, then, should we believe that he came from Prussia, as is asserted by Lomonosof? And even if it were true, as he affirms, that Rurik came from the Niemen and from Rugen, does not Prætorius tell us that Alaric and his Gothic successors were kings of the Rugians? and is not the name of Goths given to the Rugians by Procopius?

Oleg imposed a tribute on the Novgorodians for the support of his Varangians. Ivor sent to ask assistance from the insular Varangians. Vladimir sought an asylum among the Varangians, and returned with them. Yaroslaf had recourse to the Varangians beyond sea. Were not, then, the princes who threw themselves into the arms of the Varangians, of the same origin with them? Now, is not this insular and transmarine origin Scandinavian?

Karamsin also (vol i. p. 45,) says, that the Varangians were Goths or Normans; that from time immemorial, there had been in Sweden, a province named Rosslagen, the inhabitants of which were denominated Rhos or Rhotses, &c. Moreover, the Kurisch-haf, in old Prussia, is likewise called Russna; the northern branch of the Memel bears the name of Russ, and the country that of Po-Russia; for those Rhos, or Ross, were Swedes who, according to Karamsin's statement, had conquered Prussia. One of the oldest streets in Novgorod, had the appellation of Prussia-street. Lastly, about 1560, Ivan, when laying claim to Sweden, as being the patrimony of his ancestors, affirmed positively that the Varangians of Yaroslaf were Swedes.

We know, besides, that Sigurd, the brother-in-law of the King of Norway, was a subject of Vladimir, and enjoyed his confidence; and that Trygvason, King of Norway, took refuge in Russia. All this might, indeed, happen, without the Russian Grand-Princes, and what they termed their court, or their guard, having been Scandinavians. But we have also a right to infer from it, that these princes were attracted to the abodes of each other by identity of origin.

The learned and judicious Levesque says, that the Russians cannot have been Slavonians. He adds, that it is barely possible, that the

Uigors, who were Siberian Huns, may have spread as far as Livonia, and have been the original Russians ; that thus the Russians may be descendants of the Huns ; but, as all their known names are Gothic, he states that, in that case, before they conquered the Slavonians, they must themselves have been conquered by the Goths ; an opinion which is much less probable, than that of the laborious and accurate German writers, who assign a Gothic origin to the Russians.

In short, whatever may have been the primary origin of the Russians, it is indisputable that, as early as the ninth century, their alliances, their wars, their climates, and their names, had so completely, and for so long a time, blended them with the Scandinavians, that it is impossible to perceive any distinction between them. And are we to imagine that a people so famous in the north should have sprung from the Finnish tribes, which were always obscure, rather than from the Goths, who were the conquerors of the world ?

How do we know that the appellation of Russian, generally adopted since the time of Rurik, was not derived from him ? or, still more probably, may not the Slavonians, whose demi gods of the waters were called Russalks, have given that name to the Scandinavian Varangian pirates, who were more truly the demi-gods of the billows which foamed under their keels.

But, are more proofs required of the Scandinavian lineage of the Russians ? Attend, then, to a literal translation from Nestor, their oldest annalist. " In the years 860, 61, and 62, the Varangians came from beyond sea, and the Novgorodians, &c. refused them the tribute which had been agreed upon." Read, also, the following quotation—" The Novgorodians went beyond sea to the Ross Varangians ; for these Varangians were called Ross, as others were Svie (Swedes,) others, Urmians (Normans,) others, Angles, and others, Goths. They asked them for princes, and those princes went with all the nation ; and from those Varangians, the territory of Novgorod was called the land of the Russians."

Strahlemborg, a Swedish officer of Charles XII. states that, in his time, the Finns still denominated Sweden Rosslagen, and the Swedes Ruedzalains. He has no doubt that the Russian Varangians were from Scandinavia.

As to Lacombe, he no doubt knows no better than I do, why he says, that a prince named Russus gave his name to Russia.

Lisakewitz, a Russian, says positively, (Hist. of Novgorod,) that the Varangians were Goths, and called themselves Russians ; that the Roxo-

lani were Goths who moved to the south in the fourth century; and that a Swedish province formerly bore the name of Rosslagen.*

Struve, in his "Dissertation on the Ancient Russians," a scarce and very curious work, declares that the oldest Swedish authors, (he cites Saxo-Grammaticus,) speak of the existence of a Ross people in the first century; that, in the Celtic language, Riss or Ross signifies *loftiness*, whence he infers that the Riss or Ross were Scandinavian mountaineers; that their country was situated to the east of the Bothnic gulf; and that from thence they spread to the north and south of the Ladoga, in Esthonia, &c. In the monastery of St. Bertin, in Flanders, he found indubitable evidence that the Russians, who were sent by the Greek Emperor Theophilus to Louis the Debonair, spoke the same language as the Swedes.

Out of the sixty-two names of the envoys sent by Oleg and Ivan to Byzantium, we see that only three are Slavonian, and that fifty-five are evidently Scandinavian.

Yaroslaf married Indigerga, daughter of the King of Sweden; an union to which he was doubtless prompted by gratitude for the succours which he had received from the Varangians. We remark, besides, that Harold, the brother of the King of Norway, commanded the Varangians, who were the guards of Yaroslaf, and that the same station was afterwards held by Eleifur, the son of Rogvald. This arose from Scandinavian chiefs naturally being given to Scandinavian Varangians.

* It must be mentioned here, that this opinion is controverted by Malte-Brun; he believes the Russians to be derived from the Roxolani, the ancient inhabitants of central Russia. These Roxolani were known by their wars against the Roman Empire, in 68, 166, and 270. About the middle of the fourth century, we find them sometimes in subjection to the Huns, and sometimes to the Goths, who were masters of that country after the time of Hermanric. It must be added, that Malte-Brun quotes Sulin and Snorro against the opinion which makes Scandinavia the cradle of the Russian nation. These authorities, however, do not seem strong enough; nor does the appellation of Roxolani bear a sufficient likeness to that of Russians, to destroy the body of proofs which are afforded by all the preceding quotations. That the Varangians were at once Russians and Scandinavians, we may, therefore, continue to believe, till the Russians of the present day shall have settled the question themselves; for it is said that they are now entering upon the inquiry with a degree of zeal, intelligence, critical spirit, and science, which is continually increasing in a remarkable manner.

It is known, that Luitprand was informed by his father-in-law, Vitricus, who witnessed, at Byzantium, the massacre of the Russians of Igor's army, that those Russians were from Scandinavia, and spoke its language.

Codinus tells us, that the Varangians of the Greek Emperor's guard wished him long life in English.—See the curious Dissertation of Lerbège, on the double Russian names; that is to say, the Scandinavian and Slavonian names of the Autocrats of the Borysthenes. Lastly, D'Anville also believes that the Russian Varangians were from Scandinavia.

NOTE 2. PAGE 12.

See Pinkerton, in his "Origin of the various Scythian and Gothic Establishments," who destroys with a single stroke of his pen the whole effect of the celebrated passage of Jornandes, "*ex hac igitur, Scandia insula, quasi officina gentium, aut certe velut vagina nationum, &c.*" by observing that that author confounds the Scythians, the Getæ, and the Goths into one people, and makes them all come from Scandinavia.

It is true that, in place of this error, Pinkerton substitutes the opinion that, in reality, these three nations were identical, but that they came from Asia, like the Sarmatians, or Slavonians; for Pinkerton does not admit that Europe had any really original and indigenous population, except some wandering Celts, Cimbrians, or Cimmerians. (See, indeed, Possidonius, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and Herodotus.) From whence, for example, it follows, that we Franks and Gascons, originally sprung from Asia and Africa, and that the Scythians and the Moors are our real progenitors.

What the peremptory assertions of Pinkerton, and this throng of conflicting authorities, most clearly prove is, the impossibility of rationally deciding in favour of any opinion whatever, except that the most anciently and historically known inhabitants to the north of the Black Sea were the Scythians; those of the centre of European Russia, the Sarmatians or Slavonians; those of the north, the Tschudi and the Finns; and, lastly, that the Russ Varangians were derived from Scandinavia.

NOTE 3. PAGE 358.

*Extracts from Book VI. of the Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce, Esq.
London, 1782.*

“ His Majesty set out for Moscow on the 3d of February, having received intelligence that Count Tolstoi was on his way thither from Naples with the Czarowitz, where they arrived the 11th. A grand council was held at Moscow on this occasion, consisting of the great men of the empire; the Czar being determined to exert, in a most solemn manner, his justice on the Prince for his disobedience. The council being met, the Czarowitz was brought into the hall as a prisoner before them. At his entering, he presented a writing to his Majesty, containing a confession of his crime. The Czar demanded of him what was his desire. The Prince implored his mercy, and begged he would save his life. His Majesty granted his request, on condition he made a full discovery of all his accomplices, and renounced all his claim and title to the succession, under his hand. Upon this, the Prince signed an instrument, setting forth that, finding himself not qualified for government, he disclaimed all right of succession to the crown; and afterwards confirmed it upon oath, acknowledging his brother Peter lawful heir to the crown. This being done, all the ministers and great men present took the oaths excluding Prince Alexis from the crown, and acknowledging Prince Peter to be the undoubted successor to it; engaging to stand by him with their lives, against all that should dare oppose him; and that they never would, under any pretence whatever, adhere to Prince Alexis, or assist him in the recovery of the said succession. The same oath was afterwards administered to the army and navy, at home and abroad, and to every subject of the Russian empire. Nevertheless, the Prince was still kept under confinement, and nobody admitted to him, except Count Tolstoi and such others as were appointed by the Czar.

“ This being over, the Prince’s accomplices were secured; in which number were his mother, formerly Czarina, now Abbess of the monastery of Susdale, and her gallant, the Boyar Glebof, who not only had lived a lewd life with the mother, but was a principal agent in the conspiracy

between her and her son, the Czarowitz. The letters they had written were published, and were both treasonable and scandalous.

“ Next the Boyar Abraham Lupochin, brother to the late Czarina and uncle to the Prince ; Alexander Kikin, First-Commissioner of the Admiralty, formerly a very great favourite with the Czar ; the Bishop of Rostof ; and Pustinoi, the late Czarina's confessor and treasurer, were all tried and sentenced. Glebof was impaled alive, and the other four were broke alive on the wheel. A high square wall was built before the castle-gate for that purpose ; the impaled corpse of Glebof was placed in the middle, and the heads of the other four were, each on a long pole, set up at the corners. Several others suffered death at the same time, among whom fifty priests and monks, late companions of the Czarowitz, who had led him into all manner of debauchery, were all beheaded on one block, which was a tree provided for the holding them all at once.

“ In this conspiracy, the Princess Mary, half-sister to the Czar, was also concerned ; she was afterwards confined in a monastery near to Lake Ladoga ; and the late Czarina Attakesa Lupochin, was confined in the fortress of Sluteltburgh, upon an island in that Lake.” (Mr. Bruce here mistakes the destination of one of these Princesses for that of the other.)

“ All the Czarowitz's domestics and his mistress Euphrosina were taken up ; as was also Prince Wasilia Dolgoruky, Lieutenant-General and Colonel of the Guards, Knight of the Order of the Elephant, and Director-general for enquiring into the mismanagements of the Czar's revenue, in which post he behaved with the utmost insolence to Prince Menzikoff, Admiral Apraxin, and several others. He was banished to Casan for life : the Siberian Czarowitz, and the senators Woinof, Worof, and John Kikin, were also banished ; but the senators Count Peter Apraxin, brother to the admiral, and Count Samarin, were acquitted. One of the Czar's pages and several nuns suffered severe corporal punishments, and were, with most of the Czarowitz's domestics, sent into banishment ; but Euphrosina, making it appear that it was by her persuasion the Prince returned, and that, after her first lying-in, having conformed with the Russian faith, she was actually married to the Prince when they were on their journey, by a Grecian priest, who was seized at Leipsic and brought prisoner to Moscow, she was not only set at liberty, but had several of the Czarowitz's jewels restored to her, and a handsome fortune appointed for her support out of the treasury. She could never be prevailed on to marry. She was but of mean extraction, and a captive of Finland. * * * *

“ From the numerous executions and punishments after the inquisition at Moscow, every body believed that business at an end ; but from the fresh discoveries made every day, it appeared the Prince had not been genuine in his confession of all his confederates in the conspiracy ; and the accomplices appearing so numerous, and the plot so deep laid, the Czar found it absolutely necessary to bring the Prince to a formal trial. For this purpose he summoned all the nobility and clergy, the principal officers of the army and navy, the governors of provinces, and many others of different ranks and degrees, to attend at the senate-house, to examine and try the said Prince. The trial was begun the 25th of June, (the particulars of which have been so fully related by others, that I thought a repetition of it needless,) and continued to the 6th of July, when this supreme court, with unanimous consent, passed sentence of death upon the Prince, but left the manner of it to his Majesty’s determination. The Prince was brought before the court, his sentence was read to him, and he was reconveyed to his prison in the fortress.

“ On the next day his Majesty, attended by all the senators and bishops, with several others of high rank, went to the fort, and entered the apartments where the Czarowitz was kept prisoner. *Some little time thereafter, Marshal Weyde came out, and ordered me to go to Mr. Bear’s, the druggist, whose shop was hard by, and tell him to make the POTION STRONG which he had bespoke, as the Prince was then very ill. When I delivered this message to Mr. Bear, he turned quite pale, and fell a shaking and trembling, and appeared in the utmost confusion, which surprised me so much, that I asked him what was the matter with him ; but he was unable to return me any answer. In the mean time the Marshal himself came in, much in the same condition with the druggist, saying, he ought to have been more expeditious, as the Prince was very ill of an apoplectic fit. Upon this the druggist delivered him a silver cup with a cover, which the Marshal himself carried into the Prince’s apartments, staggering all the way as he went, like one drunk. About half an hour after, the Czar with all his attendants withdrew with very dismal countenances ; and when they went, the Marshal ordered me to attend at the Prince’s apartment, and in case of any alteration, to inform him immediately thereof. There were at that time two physicians and two surgeons in waiting, with whom and the officers on guard, I dined on what had been dressed for the Prince’s dinner. The physicians were called in immediately after to attend the Prince, who was struggling out of one convulsion into another ; and, after great agonies, expired at five o’clock in the afternoon.*

I went directly to inform the Marshal, and he went that moment to acquaint his Majesty, who ordered the corpse to be emboweled ; after which it was laid in a coffin covered with black velvet, and a pall of rich gold tissue spread over it ; it was then carried out of the fort to the church of the Holy Trinity, where the corpse lay in state till the 11th in the evening, when it was carried back to the fort, and deposited in the royal burying-vault, next the coffin of the Princess, his late consort ; on which occasion, the Czar and Czarina, and the chief of the nobility, followed in procession. Various were the reports that were spread concerning his death. It was given out publicly, that on hearing his sentence of death pronounced, the dread thereof threw him into an apoplectic fit, of which he died. *Very few believed he died a natural death ; but it was dangerous for people to speak as they thought.* The ministers of the Emperor, and the States of Holland, were forbid the Court for speaking their minds too freely on this occasion ; and, upon complaint against them, were both recalled.

“ Thus died Prince Alexis, undoubted heir to that great monarchy ; little regretted by people of rank, as he always shunned their acquaintance and company. It was said, the Czar had taken uncommon pains in the education of this Prince, but all in vain ; indolent and slovenly by nature, he kept the lowest of company, with whom he indulged himself in all manner of vice and debauchery. His father, to put a stop to this, sent him abroad to see foreign courts, thinking thereby to reclaim him, but all to no purpose ; on which he ordered him to attend him on all his expeditions, thereby to have a watchful eye over him himself ; but the Prince evaded this, by continually pretending to be sick, which might probably be the case, as he was most part of his time drunk. The Czar, at least, thought to reclaim him, by marrying him to some foreign Princess. After the death of his amiable Princess, his Majesty ordered him to attend him in his expedition to Germany ; and being on his journey, under pretence of going to join him in Mecklenburg, he fled privately, and sought the protection of his brother-in-law, the Emperor of Germany, whom he endeavoured to engage in a war against his father.

“ It was made appear on his trial, that he threatened, whenever he came to the throne, to overturn all his father had done ; declaring that he would then be revenged on Prince Menzikoff, and his sister-in-law, by impaling them alive, as also the great-Chancellor Count Golofkin, and his son, for persuading him to marry the Princess Wolfenbuttel ;

that he would send all his father's favourites into banishment, and expel all foreigners out of the country; that he would release his mother out of confinement, and put dame Catherine and her children in her place; after this, he would form his Court of people who had the ancient manners and customs of Russia most at heart, for he hated all innovations. Nothing could have touched the Czar more sensibly, than threatening to overthrow all he had been doing for so many years for the welfare and glory of his country, with so much danger, toil, and labour, without ever sparing his own person; which made him say, with great emotion, that he would rather give his dominions to a worthy stranger, than be succeeded by so worthless a son: at the time of this expression, he had no other son but the Czarowitz, which showed plainly, he had the good of his country more at heart than the succession in his own family."

Whoever will take the trouble to read these memoirs of an officer who was about the person of Peter I. and whose near relation was one of the most useful generals of that reformer, will be convinced of the veracity of his narrative. The artless simplicity of his whole book, and his constant admiration of the Czar, strengthen the melancholy conviction which arises from the perusal of the above quoted passage. Shortly after the execution, P. H. Bruce was entrusted with the education of the son of the unfortunate Alexis.

Leclerc, who was on the spot, and a witness of this crime, quotes Bruce in his history, and entertains no doubt of the sad veracity of his narrative, which he gives at full length.

"*It is certain,*" writes Voltaire, "*that his son died the day after the passing of the sentence, and that the Czar had at Moscow one of the finest Pharmaceutical establishments in Europe.*"*

* Voltaire, *Age of Peter the Great*, edition of 1784, vol. xvii. p. 411.

NOTE 4. PAGE 363.

Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce. (Book iii. p. 77.)

“ As Prince Menzikoff was also a person raised from a very low degree, I was told the following circumstances of his rise. He was born of gentle, but very poor parents; and they dying, left him very young, without any education, insomuch that he could neither read nor write, nor even did he till the day of his death: his poverty obliged him to seek service in Moscow, where he was taken into the house of a pastry-cook, who employed him in crying mince-pies about the streets; and having a good voice, he also sung ballads, whereby he was so generally known, that he had access into all the gentlemen's houses. The Czar, by invitation, was to dine one day at a boyar's, or lord's house, and Menzikoff happening to be in the kitchen that day, observed the boyar give directions to his cook about a dish of meat he said the Czar was fond of, and took notice that the boyar himself put some kind of powder in it, by way of spice; taking particular notice of what meat that dish was composed, he took himself away to sing his ballads, and kept sauntering in the street till the Czar arrived, when exalting his voice, his Majesty took notice of it, sent for him, and asked him if he would sell his basket with the pies. The boy replied, he had power only to sell the pies; as for the basket, he must first ask his master's leave, but as every thing belonged to his Majesty, he needed only to lay his commands upon him. This reply pleased the Czar so much, that he ordered Alexander to stay and attend him, which he obeyed with great joy. Menzikoff waited behind the Czar's chair at dinner, and seeing the before-mentioned dish served up and placed before him, in a whisper, begged his Majesty not to eat thereof; the Czar went into another room with the boy, and asked his reason for what he had whispered to him, when he informed his Majesty what he had observed in the kitchen, and the boyar's putting in the powder himself, without the cook perceiving him, made him suspect that dish in particular; he therefore thought it his duty to put his Majesty upon his guard. The Czar returned to the table without the least discomposure in his counte-

nance, and with his usual cheerfulness ; the boyar recommended this dish to him, saying it was very good : the Czar ordered the boyar to sit down by him, (for it is a custom in Moscow for the master of the house to wait at table when he entertains his friends,) and putting some of it on a plate, desired him to eat and show him a good example. The boyar, with the utmost confusion, replied, that it did not become the servant to eat with his master ; whereupon the plate was set down to a dog, who soon dispatched its contents, which in a very short time, threw him into convulsions, and soon deprived him of life. The dog being opened, the effect of the poison was clearly discovered, and the boyar was immediately secured, but was found next morning dead in his bed, which prevented all farther discovery.

NOTE 5. Page 429.

He was deeply lamented. Love in some, gratitude in many others, and admiration in all, burst forth in the language of regret. His remembrance remained impressed on every part of the empire ; and, nevertheless, it must be remarked, to the honour of his people, that their sorrow has not been satisfied with such numerous monuments : they have collected, with a religious veneration, every thing that has any connection with his person. When foreigners visit them, they still show, with a just pride, the image of this great man, moulded from his own body. His head is covered with the very locks that he caused to be cut off and arranged, expressly for the purpose, during the Persian war. He is seated, dressed in his court dress, the only one which he ever had ; it was embroidered for him by Catherine, and was worn by him at the coronation of that Empress. Near this are preserved with respectful care, the walnut-tree desk, at which he wrote standing, and the height of which will only suit a man of more than six feet in stature ; a plan of Cronstadt, a multitude of manuscripts in the hand-writing of the hero, the last shoes that he wore, and which have been several times pieced, his uniform pierced by a Swedish ball, his arms, his captain's spontoon, his charger, stuffed, which he rode at Pultava, his too formidable dubina, a thick bulrush, with an ivory head, a bar of iron, weighing a hundred and twenty pounds, which he himself forged, the lathe which he used, an ivory chandelier, which he wished to make his mas-

ter-piece in the art of turning, his female dog, which he had stuffed, and for which he had a fondness, like that which has since been remarked in the Great Frederick; and, lastly, a design for a *Trajan column*, which he meant to turn with his own hands. *The pedestal would have been embellished with four inscriptions, and the circumference with plates of copper, on which would have been engraven his victories over the Swedes. And more than this, the summit would have been crowned by the statue of this great man;* in the same manner as, at a distance of eight hundred leagues, and at a period of a century later, we have seen, on a similar column, that of the other colossus, who penetrated even to Moscow, to shake to its foundations the empire of the Czar.

THE END.

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